STREET PHOTO GRAPHY CONTACT SHEETS

ERIC KIM

WHY CONTACT SHEETS?

I remember when I first started shooting street photography, I had the pervading "myth of the decisive moment" stuck in my head. Meaning-- I assumed that the greatest street photographers would only take one photo of a scene, and suddenly "get" the photo in just one snap.

I greatly admired the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson, who described the "decisive moment" as this:

"To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression." - Henri Cartier-Bresson

However if you inspect the contact sheets of Henri Cartier-Bresson themselves, you will see how he often took many photos to capture that one single decisive moment. It wasn't that Henri Cartier-Bresson tried to say that a great photograph had to be taken in one click, but the fact that finding the meaning of a scene depended on recognizing the *importance* of the scene.

Henri Cartier-Bresson was often reluctant to show his contact sheets saying that it was akin to showing your dirty laundry for everyone to see. Similarly, most chefs would not feel comfortable having you see the "behind the scenes" how they cook their meals, or perhaps how dirty their kitchens may be.

One of my favorite photography books is "Magnum Contact Sheets" -- because I was able to get into the mind and psyche of all these great

photographers. I saw how these great photographers "worked the scene" and how much effort they put into getting that one great shot.

Furthermore, I was fascinated by how photographers would choose their one "best" photo when overwhelmed with a multitude of shots taken in the same scene.

Therefore it is my hope that I can show you my "dirty laundry" behind some of my personal favorite images. I hope that this book will help show the serendipity of capturing a "decisive moment" in street photography, as well as the importance of taking multiple frames to capture that one special moment.

Tuesday, Feb 16, 2016 @ UC Berkeley

NYC, 2015

This photograph of a laughing lady is quite possibly one of my favorite photographs. The story behind the photo is this:

I was teaching a street photography workshop in NYC, and on Sunday we were heading back to the workshop venue. While walking with my students, I saw this amazing woman on 5th avenue-- and I knew instantly that she was a character that I wanted to photograph.

I then approached her, and told her, "Excuse me miss-- you look absolutely amazing. Do you mind if I made a few photos of you?" She was quite flattered and told me that she was 80+ years old, and she accepted.

I then started to get to work. I shot all these photos on a digital Ricoh GR camera, shot at 28mm with the macro mode enabled on the camera. I first started to take photos of her at different angles, with each click of the shutter adjusting my framing. Another thing that I did was adjust the exposure-compensation on the camera-- I believe the final exposure was around -1 2/3rds or so.

Some of the photos shot before the final shot were shot with a flash in "P" mode at around ISO 400.

When I was taking photos of this woman, I asked her to look up, look down, and for the best shot (#19) she told me, "You're crazy-- ha ha ha!" (because I took so many photos of her at a close proximity without saying much).

When I'm in the zone, I just point my camera, and focus on the edges of the frame, and keep clicking. For this photo I didn't make much small chat with her while clicking-- I just knew that I needed to get this shot.

Another key thing to note in this image is that often when your subject notices you taking a photo of them-- it can actually end up making a better photograph.

For example, if I tried to take a photo of her candidly without permission, I would have never got a photo of her laughing (in response to me).

So don't always feel like you need to be a "ninja" street photographer. Put yourself in the scene, and be like a film director who puts themselves in their own play.

Even more interesting-- I had a photographer tag me on Instagram of the same lady! Small world.

PHOTO

andrisdze
Fifth Avenue

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DOWNTOWN LA, 2015

For this photograph, I was teaching a street photography workshop in Downtown LA, and while walking down Broadway, I saw this man on his phone, with this one shaft of light in his eye. I saw the moment and instantly knew that this might be a good photograph.

I was there with the Ricoh GR, and got very close to him, and just started clicking. Before I started to take photos, I knew that I wanted to under-expose the background (to make very deep blacks), so I set the exposure compensation to around -2 or so.

Funny enough, when I started to "work the scene", the man didn't move at all. I just kind of nodded my head at me, and he didn't mind me making photos.

Note in the contact sheet, some of the photos include the man looking away from me, and some of him not looking at me. Also towards the end, I tried to change my position a little bit. Ultimately shot #10 was the best.

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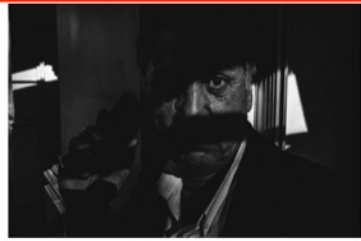
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DOWNTOWN LA, 2015

This photograph was also shot at the same weekend as the "one eye" photo (what a great weekend-- two "keepers" in such a short period of time, usually I am satisfied with one "keeper" a month).

I have a soft spot for guys who look badass-- especially those with tattoos. I think part of this is because I have always wanted to get a tattoo myself (but have been too scared of getting something I might end up regretting). Furthermore, I've grown up with self-confidence issues, so I always find inspiration in those who at least appear to have self-confidence on the outside (with a tough exterior).

Also on Broadway, I saw this guy walking with his girlfriend. I stopped him, and asked if we could make a few photos of him.

One of the big things I try to do when shooting "street portraits" is to find a simple background, and ask them to move a little bit to have them against that background. In this case, a simple gated wall was the perfect urban backdrop.

So I got to work-- taking a few photos of him while he was talking (#1-6). Another thing I try to do is ask people to make hand-gestures (rather than just having their hands by their sides). So I asked him to just put his hand on his chin, and show off his "grille" (#7-10). I also spotted his cool shades, and asked him to model them for me (#11-12). Around shot #17, I ask him to show me his tattoos, and focus taking a few photos of his arms.

When the scene started to get really interesting was around #24, when he started to sweat from the sun (it was quite hot that day). Then out of nowhere, his girlfriend came out with a piece of cloth, and started to wipe his forehead.

When that started to happen, I yelled: "Oh, can you do that again? Can you keep wiping his forehead?"

Whenever I see someone doing something interesting, I have no issue asking them to "keep doing it" or for them to "do it again."

For this shot I was borrowing a friend's Leica M8, and the buffer on that camera is ridiculously slow. So when I started to click (around #25), the camera was still buffering images, so it wouldn't take any photos.

I was a bit panicky, but I kept trying to hit the shutter. It wasn't until *after* he left that I knew that I got a good shot (#27).

I feel the morale of the story is that if you see something interesting, ask people to repeat it. It comes down to identifying an interesting gesture or moment when you see it, and then asking people to re-enact it.

A lot of street photographers I know are against this-- asking people to "stage" their photos. Personally I have no issue with it, because I don't claim that my photos are 100% candid. In-fact, I think that it is more difficult to get an interesting posed street photograph than getting an interesting candid photograph.

Regardless of your personal opinion, don't forget to "work the scene" and know how to identify good moments-- which are often **hand-gestures**.

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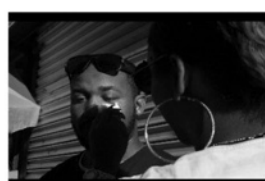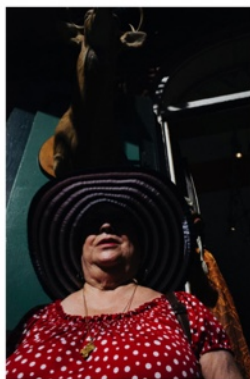
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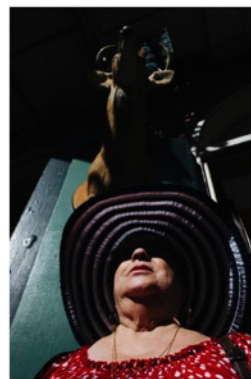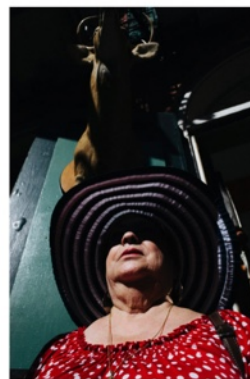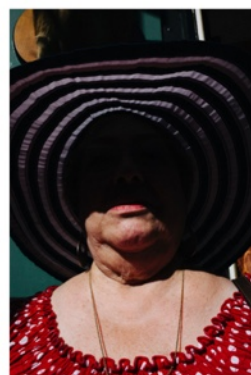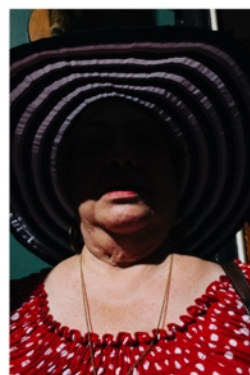31 / 35

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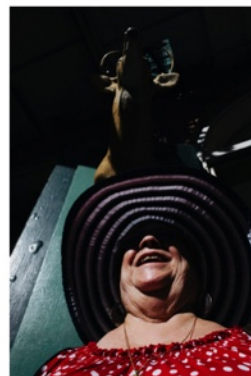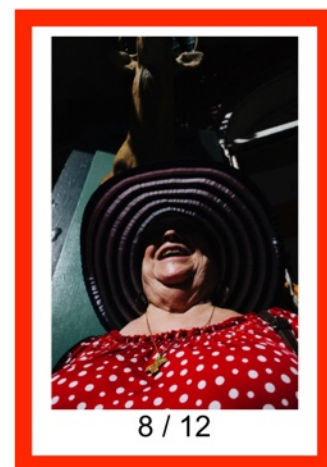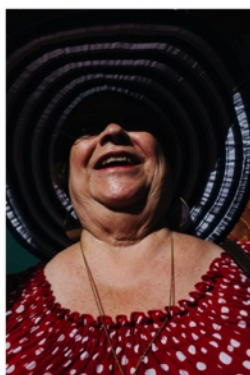
NEW ORLEANS, 2015

In this photograph, I was in New Orleans, and saw this woman in this lovely hat. The sun was harsh, so I shot this photograph at around -2 exposure compensation, and stopped this woman and asked her to pose in front of this store with this deer mannequin in the top of the frame.

You can see how I kept trying to move around the camera at different low angles (shot this by looking through the LCD screen on the Ricoh GR camera). I just happened to get a good expression out of the woman in frame #8. For more dynamic shots, try to shoot as low as you can.

You can also see how what makes the shot is the fact that the lady started to laugh and show her teeth in #7-10).

In the earlier shot (#6 picture above), you see the photo isn't as dynamic without her laughing.

Try to capture emotions in your photos by provoking a reaction or a hand/facial gesture. This will truly bring your photos to life.

DOWNTOWN LA, 2015

One of the common misconceptions in street photography is that you can only make good photographs in "good" light (golden hour during sunrise/sunset). However there is no "good" or "bad" light-- it only matters what you do with the light which counts.

For this photograph, I saw an interesting man with these fantastic tattoos in "Santee Alley" in Downtown LA (imagine a super-crowded alley where people are buying fashion-related items).

I stopped him and said, "Excuse me sir, your tattoos look badass. Do you mind if I got some shots of you and your tattoos?" He obliged.

I have found one of the best ways to get a photograph of someone is to compliment them, and tell them *why* you want to take a photograph of them.

For example, I often find that people love it when you compliment them on their tattoos. Why? It costs a lot of money to get a tattoo, it causes pain, and it is generally very personal to someone who decides to get them. So to have their tattoos acknowledged is a huge compliment. And honestly, they also know they look badass.

Anyways because the light was quite harsh (around noon), I also took this photograph at -2 exposure compensation.

As you can tell from the contact sheets, there was a strong line where the light was cut off. I therefore asked him to move a little back and forth in order to get his face perfectly positioned in the light where the shadows would cut off just above his eye.

I also took several photos (some landscape and some portrait-orientation). When I'm shooting on the streets, I'm not always sure which perspective will work the best, so I try to shoot both landscape and portrait whenever I have enough time.

I also took some photos with a flash in "P" mode, and you can see the difference between the photo on the left and right. The flash brings out some detail, but ultimately I preferred the dramatic look of the light in the left photograph.

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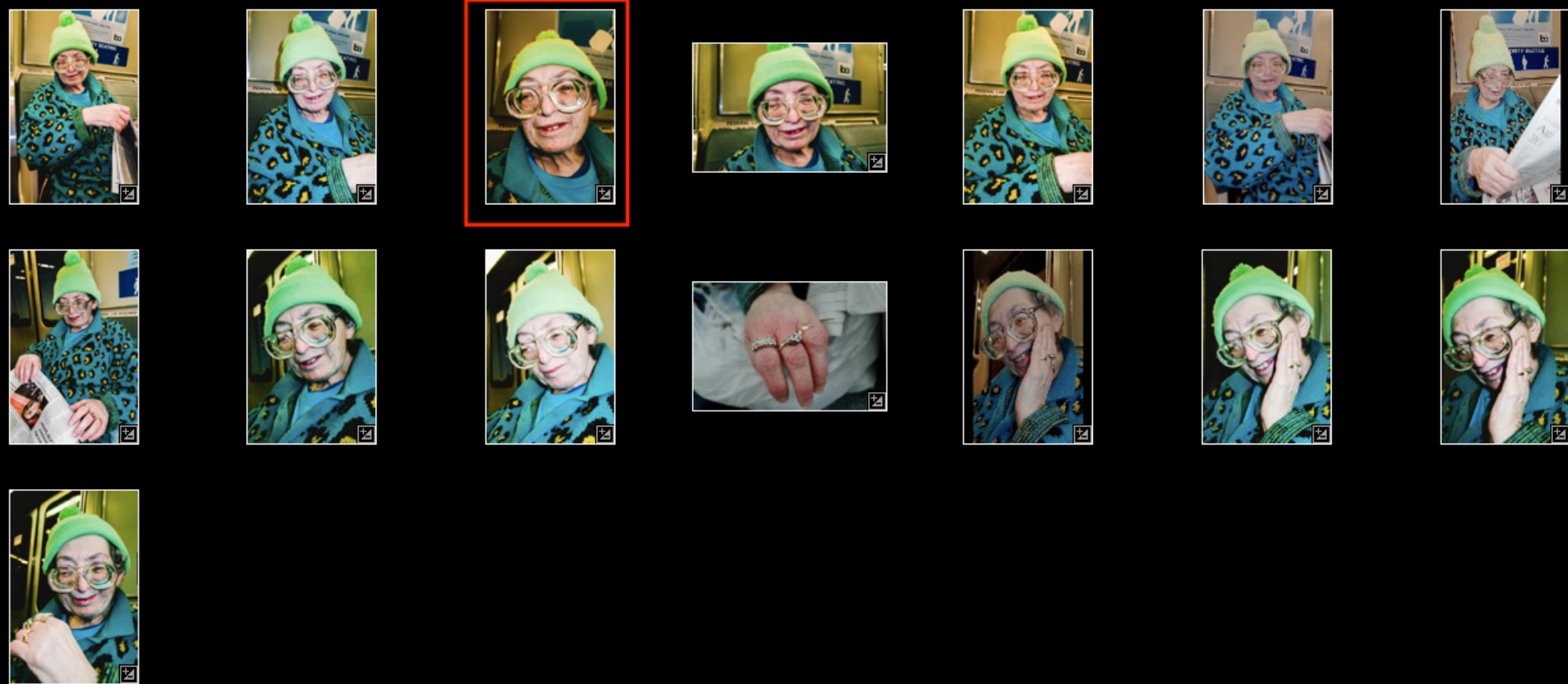
SF, 2015

You never know how people are going to respond unless you ask.

I was on the BART (subway) going to San Francisco, and I saw this fascinating woman sitting by the door. She had these fantastic glasses which magnified her eyes (reminded me of Milhouse from the Simpsons), and I really wanted to make a portrait of her.

I was about 5 meters away from her, and kept staring at her, hesitating whether I should ask her to make a photograph or not.

On one hand, I felt a bit concerned if she thought that I would be trying to make fun of her or something. But on the other hand, I didn't want to regret *not* asking her for permission to make her image.

I have a new personal rule in street photography: if I see a photograph that I really want to shoot but feel nervous, I *must* take the photograph (or at least ask for permission). Why? Because if you see a person or a scene you are afraid to photograph, that is your subconscious telling you that this might be a good shot-- and you are only afraid of taking the photograph because of your imagined negative consequences. But in reality, these negative predictions you make never happen (most people are *not* offended if you take a photograph of them, regardless of what you might believe).

So I swallowed, mustered up my courage, and walked over to her to ask nicely for permission.

She was sitting down in the chair, so I crouched down until I was eye-to-eye level with her. I did this to appear less threatening, and to get on her level (your body language determines how comfortable people will be around you).

I then told her that I saw her from across the room and how I found her glasses and her look interesting, and if I could make a few portraits of her. The lady then paused, stopped, looked at me and said, "You know, I saw you from across the train and usually I don't like people taking my photograph. But because you asked so nicely, of course you may take my photograph."

I was thrilled, and I got to work.

I took my Ricoh GR out of my front jacket pocket, turned it to "P" mode, ISO 800, and turned it to macro mode. She asked me, "What do you want me to do?" I asked her to simply carry on and read her newspaper.

I got my favorite shot relatively early (#3), and I shot this *extremely* close to her face (you really have to get close to someone with a 28mm lens if you want to fill the frame with their face). I was also lucky that I happened to shoot this at the right perspective, which gives you an edgy per-spective look of the woman's face, but also a bit of her "feistiness."

I took several photographs afterwards, shooting from different angles and perspectives. Towards the end (frame #11) I noticed she had this lovely ring on. I asked her about it (she told me her hus-band got it for her) and I took a few photos of her hand, and asked her to pose for me by showing off her ring by putting it close to her face.

I then had the loveliest conversation with her for around 20 minutes on the train. She told me that she was one of the early feminists at UC Ber-keley (she went there for her undergraduate stud-ies in 'Women's Studies') and how she helped promote gender equality on campus. I then con-nected with her by telling her that my partner

Cindy was also a feminist, currently studying at UC Berkeley. Small world.

If there is anything I learned from this interaction it is this: you will never know what kind of stories or connections you can have with complete strangers. The only key to open up this door is to ask for permission, and to treat people with dig-nity, love, and respect.

When in doubt, ask for permission.

NYC, 2015

I have a personal rule: if I see someone I want to photograph I must approach them and ask them permission to take their photograph.

I am drawn to all different types of characters-- people who are "stereotypically beautiful", those who look like they have faces with stories in them, and those who are ignored by society.

In this case, I saw this beautiful model in the streets of NYC. She had a fantastic look-- her frizzy hair, her bright red lips and her big...eyes.

It is strange with street photography I feel a lot more confident. The urge to capture someone's soul overrides my feelings of nervousness of approaching strangers.

I then approached her, and told her that I "loved her look." She was quite flattered, and we chatted for a bit. She wasn't a pretentious "fashionista" -- she was friendly, approachable, and loved the idea of being photographed.

I first asked her to stand against a simple background, and I took out my Ricoh GR and started to take photos with the flash.

Often when I ask to take peoples' photographs, they ask me, "What do you want me to do?"

In these circumstances, I ask them to look up, look down, look left, and look right.

Another new thing I've started to ask people to do (inspired by my friend John Hall) -- **asking people to close their eyes**.

One of the wonderful things of having people close their eyes is that they look more contemplative; more natural.

In this case, I preferred the first photo (of her looking away-- because she looks more mysterious and suspicious there).

However at the same time, I like the photo of her closing her eyes. She looks serene, peaceful, and calm.

For your own photos of strangers on the streets-- ask people to look in different directions, and even ask them to relax their eyelids to close them.

NEW ORLEANS, 2015

99.9% of the photos we see are shot at eye-level. Imagine people with their iPhones-- they just point their cameras and click without trying to experiment with different perspectives.

If you want to photograph someone from a low angle, it makes them look more heroic. They call this the "superman effect".

Also when I'm shooting in color, I always look for interesting color-combinations.

When I was teaching a street photography workshop in New Orleans, we saw this awesome guy walking in the streets in the "Tremé" neighborhood. We asked if we could make his portrait, and many of us started to take his photograph.

If you have a subject who is willing to be photographed; it is silly to just take 1-2 photos and leave. You want to "work the scene" as much as you can-- because you will never see that character again.

In this case, you can see the contact sheet and how I experimented with different ways of photographing him.

In the beginning, I shot more standard "headshot" like images. I also asked him stuff like to show off his glasses (#17-19). In other shots, I focused on his sunglasses.

Around shot #53 I noticed that the blue-orange of the wall would complement his outfit well, so I tried to incorporate that into the shot.

I also tried to shoot a ton of photos from a low-angle, for a novel perspective. I wasn't quite sure what shot would be best, so I kept on trying to get different framing in the photos.

You can also see how I experimented with landscape and portrait-oriented photos.

Ultimately I chose shot #81 because I loved all the compositional elements: I love how he is framed in-between the shadow of the gated fence, I love his expression with his fingers, I like the triangular composition (connecting his wrists with his face), and the color palette (orange, blue, pink, and green).

I also like the final photo because although he is "posing" -- it doesn't look as "posey" -- meaning his facial expression is relaxed, and his fingers pressed one against one another shows him deep in thought.

His life story? He picked up all the clothes from Goodwill (fashionable on a budget), and he is also a rapper.
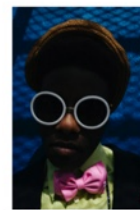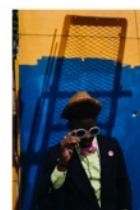
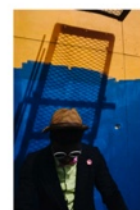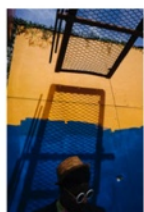1 / 112   2 / 112   3 / 112   4 / 112   5 / 112   6 / 112   7 / 112   8 / 112

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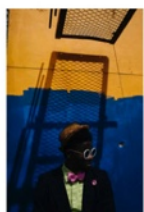
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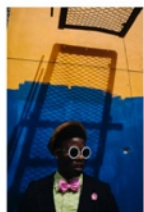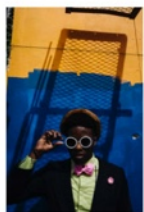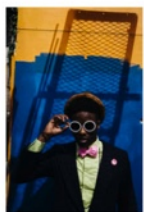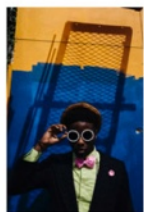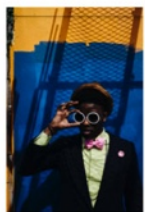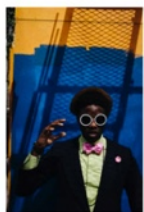
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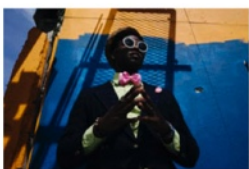
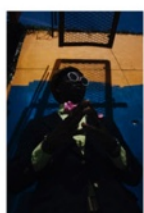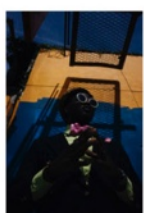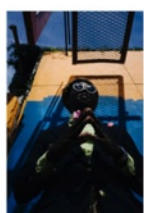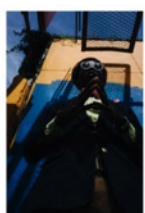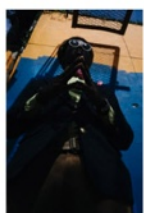41 / 112   42 / 112   43 / 112   44 / 112   45 / 112   46 / 112   47 / 112   48 / 112

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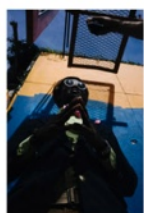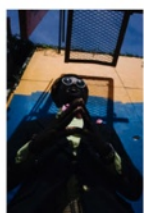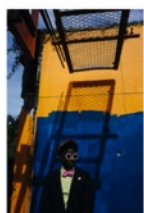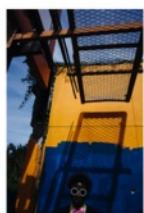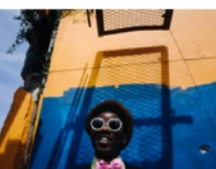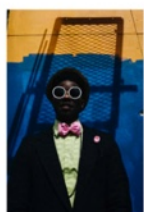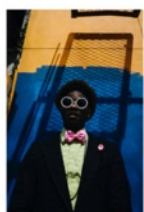
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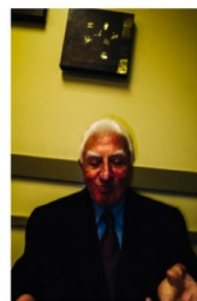
SF, 2015

Often you will meet the most interesting characters in the most unlikely places. I found this fascinating man inside a McDonalds.

I was teaching a workshop in SF (yes, a lot of my interesting street photos are shot when I am teaching), and one of the students wanted to step into McDonalds to get a quick drink of water.

I then saw this guy with a fantastic face (love his eyebrows especially) eating a hamburger.

Often we see interesting people we want to photograph, but we feel guilty of interrupting them eating or something they are doing.

However honestly-- most people don't have an issue being interrupted, especially if it means that you are giving them attention.

So I saw this guy, and I felt a bit nervous to approach him. Of course there are always thoughts going through my mind like, "What if this guy gets pissed off? What if he doesn't like me interrupting him?" These thoughts always go through my mind, but I never want to regret *not* asking someone to take their photograph. So I mustered up my courage, and approached him.

I then asked the man, "Excuse me sir, you have a fantastic look. Do you mind if I made a few photos of you?"

He shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and said no problem. I then took some photos of him eating his burger.

Then I realized that this photo wouldn't be very interesting, because the background was cluttered, and him eating a hamburger wasn't that interesting.

I then asked him to stand up, and if I could shoot a portrait of him against a simple background. He had no issue with it, and complied.

The lighting situation inside the McDonalds was quite tricky-- but this is the benefit of shooting RAW; you can always adjust the white-balance afterwards. You can see in some of the photos in the contact sheet that there isn't color-correction for the white-balance (there is a strong yellow-green cast in the images).

Anyways, I asked him to look in different directions. You can see the first two shots (#10-11) were shot head-on. Shot #13 I asked him to look right. Shot #15 I asked him to look left. Shot #21-22 I asked him to look up, and you can see him starting to laugh and crack up in #22.

And the last shot #23, I just got lucky that he gave me this slightly sinister look.

I wasn't quite sure which of the shot was the best, but my students (when looking at my contact sheets) told me the following: the other photos of him are interesting, but the shot #23 is an interesting photograph of an interesting character.

Often I am not sure which of my best photos are, so I always like to solicit feedback from my students, my photography-friends, and even just non-photography friends.

I think it is important to collect a bunch of feedback and opinions from people you admire and care about. And ultimately synthesize all of their opinions, and choose what photo you feel best shows the soul of the subject you photograph.

SF, 2015

Often photographs lie. I am honestly not 100% sure how I feel about this photograph of this lovely lady I shot on the streets of SF.

I first saw this woman walking on Market street, and I was instantly attracted to her earrings, and her turban.

She was pushing her daughter in a stroller, and she immediately struck me as this powerful woman. I stopped her, and told her that I loved how she looked and if I could make some photos of her.

She was quite flattered-- and she told me that she was actually looking for some headshots for an upcoming event she was doing. So I offered her to email her some photographs.

The first series of images (#1-29) were shot in the middle of the street, but you can see how the background is so cluttered. I knew that if I wanted a good shot of her, I needed a simple background. So I asked her to stand against a simple blank white wall which was about 10 meters away.

In the beginning, I shot her with her sunglasses on. But I felt that I wasn't able to really look into her soul without seeing her eyes.

So I asked her to take off her glasses, and #48 she did.

#54 was the most interesting image, when I caught her talking mid-moment.

The reason I feel unsure about this image is because partially she looks like an African-American caricature (an older Aunt Jemima comes to mind). Yet at the same time, I love the intensity of her face, and her powerful-looking features (like her lips). Also the ankh symbol of her earrings are quite mystical-looking and fascinating to me.

What I also like about this photograph is the ambiguity of the photograph. If a viewer never looked at the contact sheet, they wouldn't know that I had a nice chat with her, and produced an obscure image of her. Perhaps the viewer will think that I pissed off this woman and caught her off-guard?

Regardless, I was able to hear her life story which was uplifting-- she was a single-mom, who was an entrepreneur, and was able to pull herself out of poverty with her sheer persistence. The reason her life story really resonated with me is because my mom was also more or less a single-mom; who worked 3 part time jobs to raise me (cleaning homes, waitressing, cashier).

Strong women are one of the types of people who inspire me the most.

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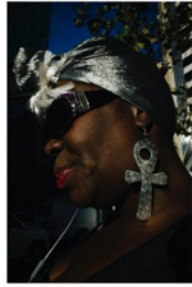
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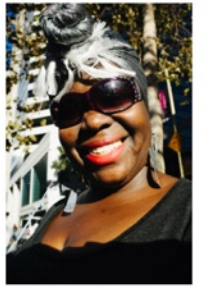
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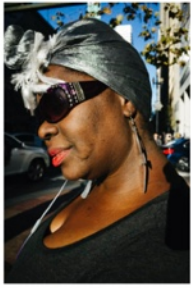1 / 69 2 / 69 3 / 69 4 / 69 5 / 69 6 / 69
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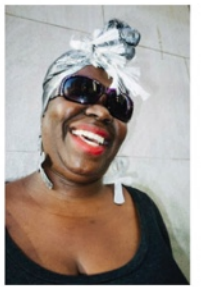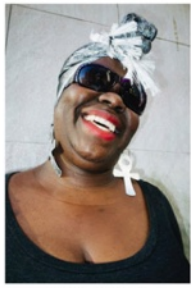31 / 69 32 / 69 33 / 69 34 / 69 35 / 69 36 / 69
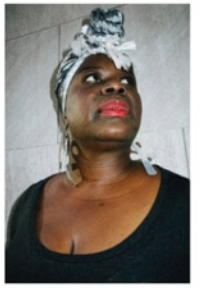37 / 69 38 / 69 39 / 69 40 / 69 41 / 69 42 / 69
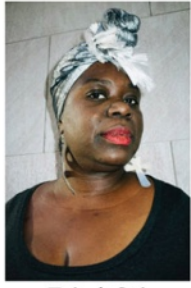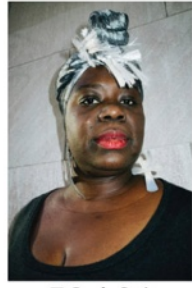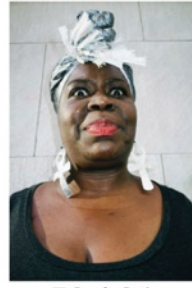43 / 69 44 / 69 45 / 69 46 / 69 47 / 69 48 / 69
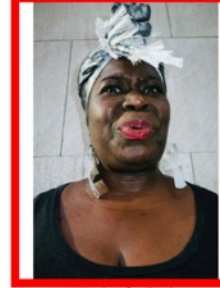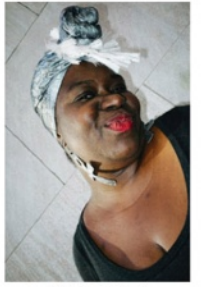49 / 69 50 / 69 51 / 69 52 / 69 53 / 69 54 / 69
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SF, 2015

One of the questions a lot of people ask me if how I feel about photographing homeless people. My personal rule is this: I just ask for permission.

Why?

To take a photograph of a homeless person without permission is to take power away from them. I think candid street photos of homeless people is to highlight their misery (to help promote your "artistic vision.") Of course there are tasteful ways to do this, but I personally am not so good at it. So I will approach the person, and ask them politely if I could make a portrait of them. If they say "no", I don't push it-- I respect their decision.

I was teaching a private 1:1 workshop with one of my students Liz, and she saw this interesting guy on the streets and asked to take portraits of him.

We ended up talking to this guy for a long time-- he was very down to earth, kind, and patient with us. We ended up making a ton of photos of him, some photos of him with his dog (#29-35).

When I make "street portraits" of a stranger, generally the beginning is a time for me to just get them comfortable. For me, rarely are the first photos any good.

Around #41, I realized that I wanted to photograph him against a simple background (the sky). I also realized that his orange beard against the blue sky was a nice color-combination.

The lighting was tricky-- the sun was coming from behind his head; which meant if I shot the photo without a flash, his face would be totally obscured with a shadow.

So in this case, I shot the portraits with the flash with the camera on "P" mode. I never shoot fully-manually with the flash when shooting with digital-- much easier to have the camera make the calculations (although I do shoot fully-manually with a flash on my film Leica MP).

Anyways, one of the important things I want to share with you is the following: don't give up.

My best photograph of this man was the last shot, when all the elements came together-- the blue sky, his orange beard, a little glint in his eye, and his slightly open mouth.

Looking at this photo now, I love how beautiful his blue eyes are.

Sad story-- I found out later that he died on the streets; I believe he died of a heart-attack or something similar.

Which made me realize; you never know what can or will happen to your subjects.

This photograph makes me realize my own mortality-- not only will I eventually die one day, but all the subjects I photograph will eventually pass away.

So remember as a photographer; you are a historian. And through the photos you make of others, **you make them immortal**.

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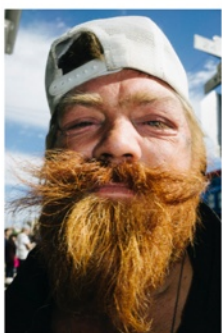
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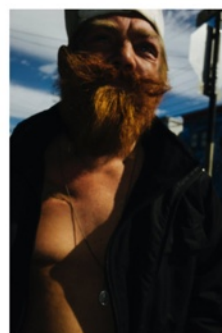
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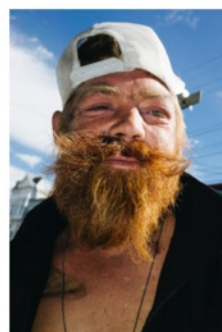
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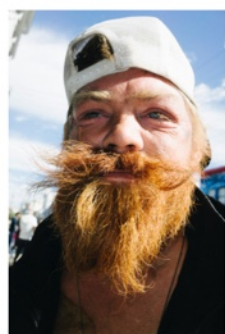
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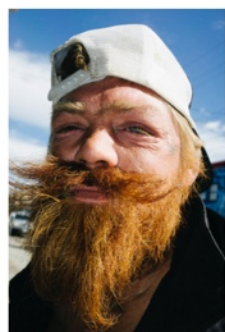
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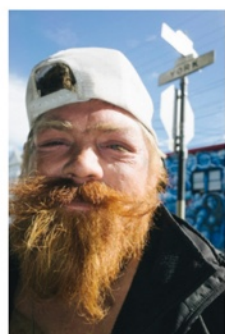
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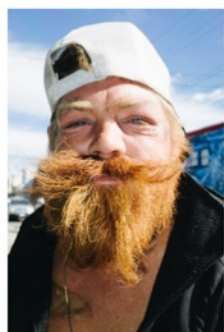
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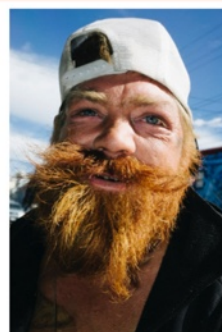
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12

LA, 2012

A lot of street photographers shoot in public places-- but rarely do they shoot indoors. I feel that a lot of street photographers are missing out by *not* shooting indoors.

One of my vices and passions in life is coffee. I love drinking it, writing in cafes, and meeting strangers as well.

In this case, I was having a coffee in Starbucks, and doing some writing. From the corner of my eye, I see this great subject; a cowboy in this bright-red outfit. I knew that characters like this didn't show up everyday; so I approached him and asked if I could make some portraits of him.

He was a fascinating character-- he showed me photos of himself on his smartphone of him in (many different colored suits). He was the typical Hollywood type-- he showed up in a lot of small films, but I also learned that he was a bit weird (he told me invented the internet, which I highly doubt).

Regardless, he was very friendly, and he also asked me, "What do you want me to do?"

I wasn't quite sure, and I just said, "Can you just fix your tie?"

I only took three frames of him; and it happened that the first photograph came out the best. I like how he looks like he is getting ready for "showtime."

I also love the colors in the photograph-- his bright red suit, his yellow sunglasses, the blue on the top of the background, and the yellow in the background.

I shot this without a flash with Kodak Portra 400 film on my film Leica and 35mm lens.

One thing I love about Portra 400 is that it exaggerates the color of red-yellow-orange. I person-ally haven't been able to imitate the look of Potra 400 when shooting digital; one of the benefits of shooting film.

LA, 2015

Many of my favorite street photographs are shot with permission.

However a lot of street photographers dislike posed photos, because they look "posey."

But I feel it is possible to get an interesting street photograph of someone with permission-- the secret is trying to get the photograph to look natural.

In this case, I was teaching a street photography workshop in Downtown LA, and one of my students (Devin) approached this woman and asked to make her portrait. He took photos of her, and I took photos of her as well.

I first noticed how her shadow made her look like Pinnochio. I thought this was such a lucky scene, and I entered the "zone", and started to take photos of her like there was no tomorrow.

I shot this all on the Ricoh GR in "P" mode with a normal exposure-compensation (0).

When I shot this photograph, I started further away, and as I started to make more photos, I started to get closer to her.

Also when clicking, I made sure to focus on the edges of the frame, so I could make a good composition without having to crop afterwards.

I didn't know that final photo was the best shot (so I kept clicking as much as I could). You can see towards the end of the contact sheet, I got extremely close to her.

What I love about this photograph is that she looks quite peaceful with her eyes closed, and also of course (the Pinnochio nose shadow).

I think this is a good example of an "open" photo (an open-ended photograph). I think the viewer will wonder: "What is on her mind? What is she lying about?"

What makes good photographs are strong symbols-- in this case, the long-nose symbolizes a lie.

14

SAN DIEGO, 2014

When people dress up, they know they look awesome. And they love being complimented on their look-- after all, they spend a lot of time getting ready in the morning. And what better compliment than noticing the effort they put into their look, and trying to make them look good in your photos?

When it comes to photographing fashionable people, I almost never get a "no." I also often offer to email them the photograph afterwards. But in this case, I doubted this guy had an email address.

The story behind this shot: I was on my way to teaching a street photography workshop in a hotel con-ference room in San Diego. On my way there, I saw this dapperly-dressed gentleman chilling in the lobby. I loved his look and approached him and told him that I loved the way he looked, and if I could make a few images. He simply shrugged his shoulders and said sure.

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I made a few photos of him, a few horizontal and a few vertical, and the point I want to make is that it is important to make a lot of photos of the same person, because you never know whether they will look straight into the lens, look away, or blink.

Frame #3 was my best shot of him, but you can quickly see that the next shot (#4) he looked away for a second. You never know what direction people's heads are going to move, so it is always better to cover your bases and shoot a lot of photos.

At the end of taking photos of him, I asked him: "So--what are you up to today?" He laughs, looks at me and says, "I own this hotel!"

In my mind I thought to myself, "bullshit" -- and I think he got a sense that I didn't buy his story. Sensing my distrust, he said, "Yeah, go over to the counter and ask them."

So I walk over to the counter, and I see tons of photos of the man (in different outfits) over the

years (probably decades). I then realized that I didn't even need to ask the staff-- he was the real deal.

I then walk over to him, and start exclaiming how awesome all his outfits are over the years, and how he is one of the coolest-dressed guys I have ever seen. He laughs, and invites me to the penthouse to have some Johnny Walker Blue Label.

I was extremely tempted-- but I needed to teach the workshop. So I thanked him for his time, and moved on.

Looking at this shot now, I like the distance in which I shot this photograph. It kind of gives you a "sense of place" in this "environmental portrait." You can see the pretty old-school background of the cheesy hotel-carpet, the random vases, and the shop store on the left.

I wish the left part of the frame wasn't so cluttered, but I think this man's "mad men" look is what gives this photo a special spot in my heart.

15

SF, 2015

One thing I am always amazed about is if you show confidence, people will respect and listen to you-- no matter how intimidating the other person may seem.

In this case, I saw this man in the streets of SF near Market street, and loved his face tattoos and his SF hat. He was sitting in front of an H&M, eating an apple-- and I approached him and said, "Excuse me boss, do you mind if I made a few photos of you just eating your apple?" He shrugged and said, "No problem." I then first took a lot of photos in the beginning with -2 exposure compensation on the Ricoh GR, trying to get a dramatic photo of just his hat, face, and the apple in his hand.

Later on, when I realized that photo wasn't probably going to be very good, I realized that there was a billboard of a lady in the background. I thought it might be an interesting juxtaposition-- the tough man juxtaposed against the ominous woman in the background. It wasn't until after I took this photo that I realized the orange tones of the man's face and his SF hat contrasted the blue of the poster
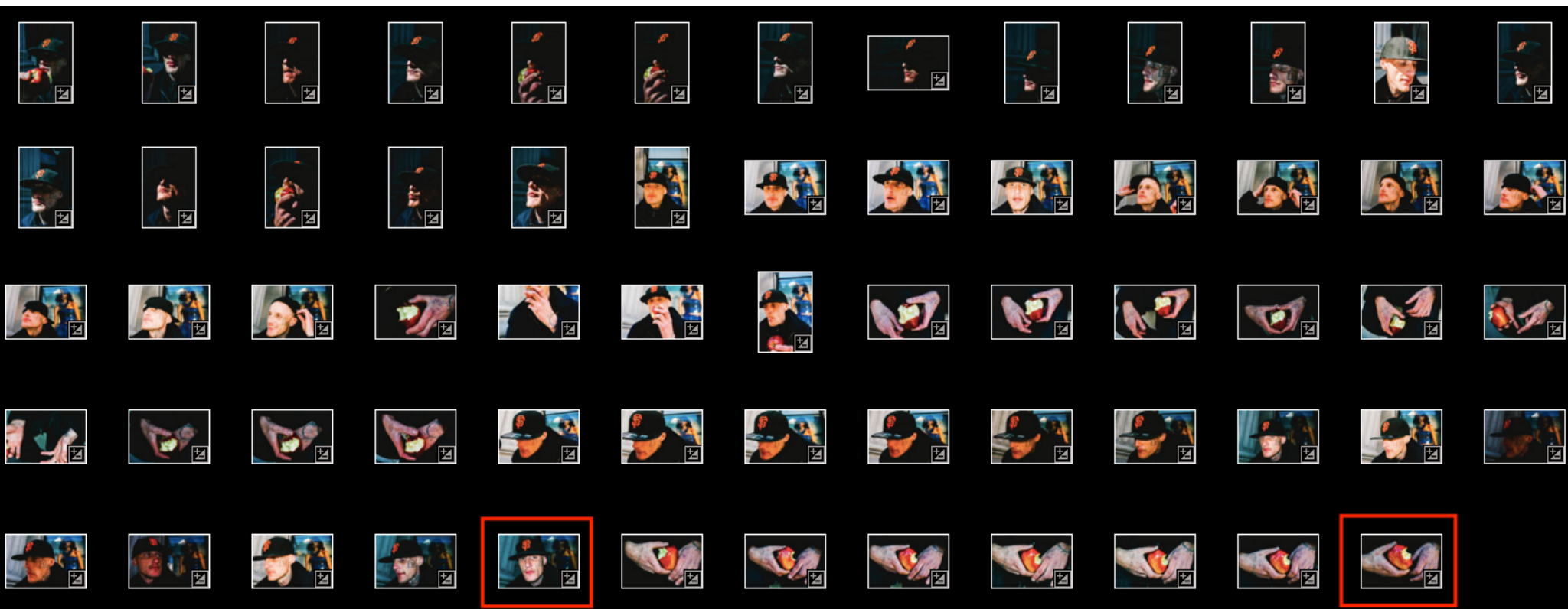
very well. So I shot a bunch of photos, some without a flash, some with a flash, and some photos just focusing on his hands and the apple that he shot. Towards the end I got the photo I was looking for. Also know when in doubt, shoot the hands of people, which often show a lot more character than their own face.

16

SF, 2015

I know up until now most of the photos I've shown are photos shot with permission. So this is a photograph which was shot candidly (without permission).

I was in SF, and the light was pretty amazing (sunset). I was shooting on my film Leica MP, and to my dismay, I ran out of film. Fortunately, I had my Ricoh GR in my backpack, so I took it out, and continued to shoot.

I am still working on my "Suits" project, so I always try to find men in suits (who look stressed and miserable) to photograph. I saw this man texting on his phone, and I approached him, taking a photo every time I took one step closer.
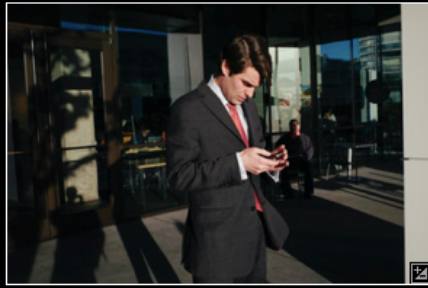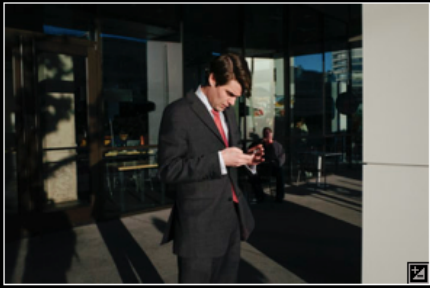
Shot #5 he noticed my presence and looked up-- and this is what I found to be the best "decisive moment." Then after I took that photo, I took another step closer and took another photo, while pretending that I was shooting something *behind* him.

As a technique when shooting candid photos of strangers, it is good to **pretend that you're photographing the background of something behind them**. This way they are a lot less suspicious of what you're doing.

Another technique you can try is after taking a photo of someone from a distance, take a step closer, take a photo, take a step closer, take another photo, and keep "working the scene" until you are "close enough."

Also as a general rule, I'm not interested in having photos of people just on their phones. So what I will do is take photos of people on their phones, hold my cameras, keep clicking, and wait until they notice my presence, and then look up and make eye contact with me.

There's a saying: "*eyes are the windows to the soul*" -- which I find true. The eyes of another will reveal their weaknesses, their anxieties, their hopes, their frustrations, and a bit of their soul. While it is extremely difficult to make eye contact with strangers, I find that they generally make stronger, more emotional images.

17

TORONTO, 2015

You never know where you will find an interesting character. In this case, it was inside a hotel lobby.

I was hanging out with my buddy Neil Ta, and we were shooting around Toronto. He tells me about this swanky new hotel in the area, and we check it out. Somewhere in the lobby, I see this fascinating guy-- who looks part playboy, part rockstar, with probably a history with drugs & rock and roll.

I wanted to make photos of him, but was of course nervous. I was afraid that he would be "too cool" for me, and would simply blow me off if I wanted to make some photos of him.

Regardless, I mustered up the courage and approached him, and told him that I thought he looked pretty cool, and if I could make some photos. His eyes lit up immediately, and I could tell that he loved the attention.

I first started to take photos of him in the hotel lobby, but then the bouncer came and politely escorted us outside (he told us that we couldn't take photos inside the lobby without permission from the hotel).

So we took it outside-- and I asked him to stand against a simple background (the bronze wall in front of the hotel). I then started to "work the scene" by putting my Ricoh GR to macro mode, shooting many different photos of him horizontally, vertically, and some photos of his hands, some photos of him with his cigarette in his mouth, some photos of his watch, some with a flash, and some without a flash.

When I see fascinating characters like this, I kind of "lose myself" -- and try to take as many photos as humanly possible. I had no idea what the best photo would be, so I took my time, and "lingered" longer than most photographers would be comfortable with.

One of the most difficult things is to shoot "enough" photos. Why? Because when you think

you've shot "enough", you actually *haven't* shot "enough."

When you think you've taken "enough" photos, I recommend **trying to take 25% more photos than you think you should**. This will ensure that you will have a higher likelihood of capturing the moment which you think best encapsulates the character of the person.

Believe it or not, most people don't mind if you take more time with them and take more photos. If people start getting a bit annoyed, you can simply tell them: "Oh I'm sorry, can I make a few more photos of you? I haven't got a good shot yet, and I want to make sure to email you the best photo I take of you." This will buy you a little more time, and a few more shots to get what you think is the best moment.

But the biggest tip is to not be afraid, especially of those who look like flamboyant playboys. They love the attention the most-- after all, who doesn't like to feel important?

18

TUCSON, 2014

Photos tell lies. That is the beauty of photography-- that the best photos are open-ended, and the viewer can make up his or her own story in their head.

If you look at this photo without any sort of context or backstory, you would simply assume that I took a photo of this nice old lady without her permission, and her expression is that of shock.

In reality, I approached her, complimented her on his outfit (her red hair and yellow outfit), and asked if I could make some photos of her. She replied by saying, "Oh! You Chinese people love to take photos of me, of course you can!"

Although I am not Chinese (I'm Korean-American), I wasn't about to complain. She granted me her grace, and I wanted to make photos of this lovely woman.
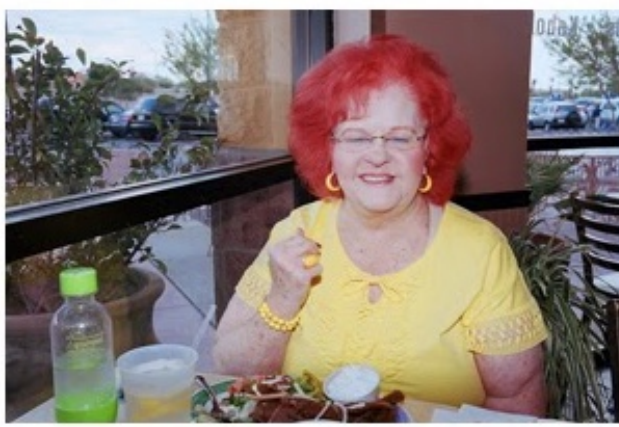
I then went to work, turning on the flash on my film Leica MP, and took about 6 photos of her on Portra 400. One of the things I love about Portra 400 is how the reds and yellows pop a ton (like you can see in my "Red Cowboy" photo earlier). The flash really makes the colors pop. You can see I took some photos with and without a flash. You can see that while the flash makes her look more like a cardboard cut-out, the natural light without a flash is dull and not very interesting to me.

So when in doubt, try to take photos *both* with a flash and without a flash. While you are shooting, you won't know what the best photo will be. But by "working the scene" and taking multiple photos, you can figure out *afterwards* (when you go home and look at the photos on your laptop) which one your best photos are.

And what got the lady to do that interesting hand-gesture?

Well, in the beginning she asked me, "What do you want me to do?" I wasn't sure and I just said, "Oh-- just show me your cool fingernails!" She laughed, and did so.

By frame #3, she then said, "How does my lipstick look" and made a gesture with her hand touching her lips-- that is the moment when I took a photo and captured an interesting hand-gesture and moment.

Don't feel guilty taking photos of people while they're talking-- this often makes more interesting "candid-like" gestures and moments.

19

TUSTIN, 2014

Sometimes eye contact works better in street photos; sometimes *not* having eye contact works better. You never know what will work better unless you try both.

The story behind this shot: I was in Tustin, California eating at Cindy's family's restaurant (Long Hai) and after lunch, we wandered around the shopping complex. I saw this interesting dive-bar with an American flag, was curious, and entered.

I have a personal rule: whenever I see a business that I find interesting, no matter what, I always go inside. Why? There might always be interesting things happening inside, or interesting people. Of course I am always a bit nervous doing this, but I never regret taking a risk and going inside.

So in this situation, I went into the dark bar, and was surprised to see all of this "hottie" bartenders dressed in bikinis, serving these pale, middle-aged men.

I remember being so shocked at this sight (I guess I am naive and had no idea that these kinds of bars existed), and I really wanted to make a photo of one of the bartenders, but was *way* too nervous.

So I go to the back of the bar (where they had this punching-bag game) and I played around, and tried to punch it as hard as I could. While doing so, I made a ruckus, and had a good time.

While walking into the bar area, this bartender approached me laughing and said, "How did you do?" I shrugged, laughed, and said, "Haha, not so good-- I thought I was a lot stronger than I actually am." She laughed back, and at that moment I knew it was my chance to ask her to make a portrait. Then I asked her, "Oh, I know this might sound a bit weird, but I love your tattoos. Do you mind if I got some photos of you and your tats?" She said sure, and I just asked her something like, "Is that Lilo & Stitch (Disney Characters) on your arm?" She said no, but looked over at it.

At that moment, I knew what I wanted her to do. I asked her: "Do you mind if I got a photo of you pointing at your bicep muscle?" She laughed and said, "But I don't have any muscles!" I laughed back and said, "Sure you do, just flex, and point at your bicep." I took one photo with a flash.

Then I asked to take another photo-- and asked her to look at the lens.

I find the first photo far more interesting (of her not looking into the camera) because by her looking away from the camera, you can't see her eyes, and she becomes more mysterious. You can also see how long her fake eyelashes are.

While this probably isn't one of the best photos that I've shot, I love all the colors of the photograph. I love the red in her bikini, the red of the Coors light sign in the background, and the blues that permeate the scene. All the red and blue reminds me of the American flag.

So if you ask someone to make their portrait, try to get photos of them looking away from the lens, and some photos of them looking directly into the lens. You will never know what will work better-- but when you go home, you can decide which works better.

Another reason why I don't like frame #2 (of her looking into the lens) is that she looks too "posey" -- often photos of people looking into the lens and *not* smiling or posing look a lot more interesting.
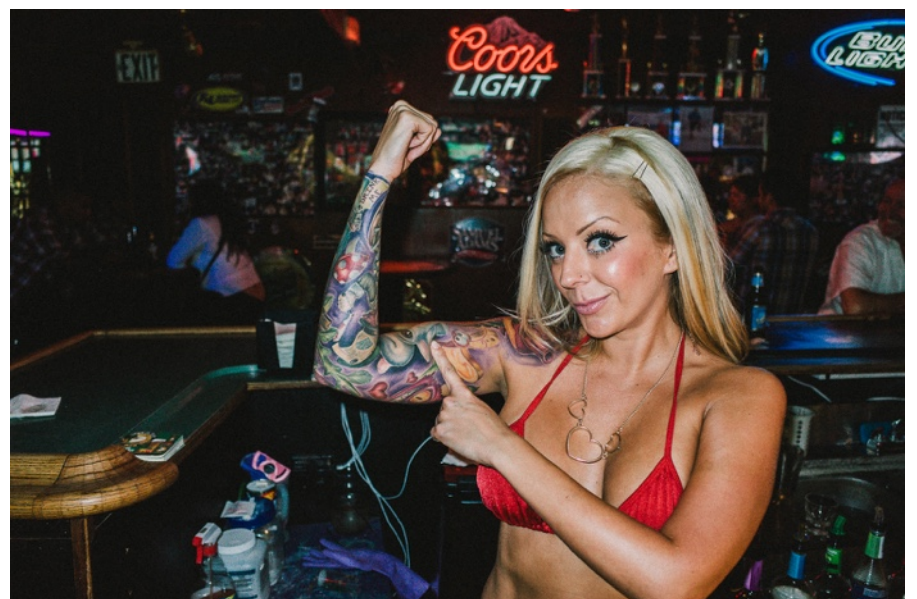
20

PHILLY, 2014

When shooting street photography, you always want to look for interesting people or "characters." One of the best places to explore are parks.

I was in Philadelphia doing a road trip, and was walking around with one of my buddies, making some street photos. We then see this park, and decide to start walking around the park. We had a nice chat with some strangers we met in the park, and then we met this guy.

Welcome Eric Rivera, who on the outside looks like some sneaker-collecting dude. In reality-- he was an ex wall-street trader. I first doubted him, but he pulled out his Blackberry and called one of his buddies who was actually in the middle of trading on Wall Street.

Eric told me that he traded for a living, retired, and now would smoke cigars in the park and ruminate about life. What a life indeed. He looked badass, and after chatting with him for around 20 minutes, I

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asked if I could make some portraits of him. He said sure, and I started to make a bunch of photos of him with a flash on my film Leica MP.

Whenever I see people smoking, I ask them to take a big puff and to blow the smoke directly into my face. You can see shot #4 came out the best, because there is a nice diagonal stream of smoke, and you can also see the woman of the cuban cigar label. Funny enough, Eric told me (while pointing to the lady on the cigar label): "This is the only woman I trust."

One of the things I love most about street photography is the chance to meet fascinating people, characters, and people who have wonderful life stories to share. If you want to see the interview that I did with Eric, search "Eric Rivera Eric Kim Interview" on YouTube-- and you will hear his whole life story.

21

NEW ORLEANS, 2015

One of the things about making great color street photographs is to have great light. With great light, the colors pop more, the backgrounds become a darker black, and there is more contrast in the scene. When you shoot black and white, the light isn't as important as when you're shooting in color (photos in black and white in flat light look okay, whereas color looks especially bad in flat light). For inspiration for color street photographs, check out the work of Alex Webb.

Anyways, for this scene, I was in New Orleans, walking down Canal street with some students, and we find this interesting IHOP background.
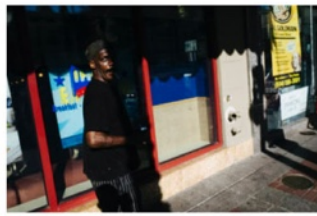
One tip: when the light is good, rather than just running around trying to make good photos, find one good spot with a good background and scene. Once you identify that spot, sit, camp out, and try to get photos of people walking by that background.
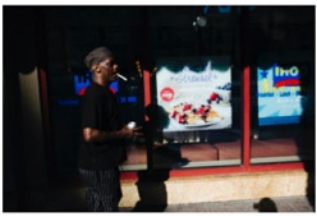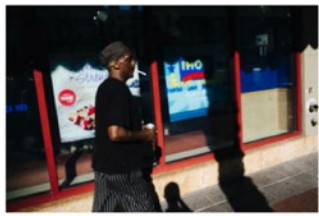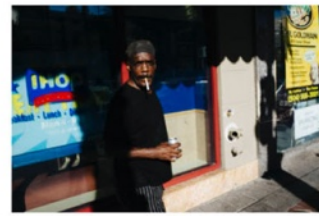
I especially liked this IHOP background, because the light was hitting it at a nice angle, I liked the red/orange/blue colors, and it was a very "American" background (nothing more American than a good old IHOP).

I then see this man walking by, and I "stalk" him by walking beside him, taking photos of him on "P" mode, center-point autofocus, ISO 800, on my Ricoh GR. Around frame #3-4 he notices me taking photos of him, and by shot #6, I just got lucky where he was positioned in the top-right of the frame, which is a good composition according to the "golden triangle" (for more on this,

read my free 'Street Photography Composition Manual' E-Book.

22

HAYWARD, 2015

A lot of street photographers forget to photograph what is close and personal to them-- their loved ones.

As of late, I have been shooting more "personal photography" instead of "street photography." Which means, I take fewer photos of strangers, and more photos of my loved ones (in this case, Cindy, the love of my life). I've been pursuing this project diligently, trying to make the most interesting images of Cindy in my "Cindy Project."

The story behind this photograph: I met up with my friend Christophe Wu, who gifted us a Samsung Oculus Rift VR headset. We all had a blast trying it out and I realized that I could probably make some interesting photos of it.

Before you put the smartphone in front of the virtual headset, there are two huge magnifying lenses in front.

As you can see in the contact sheet, the first series of images were of her with the headset on with the plastic cover. I thought it looked pretty cool, like a "Tron" model or something.

But we realized that the "Gear VR" plastic cover wasn't that interesting, so we took it off. At that moment, I saw Cindy's magnified eyes (which was hilarious, you can see Cindy starting to laugh at frame #35).

I had my Ricoh GR set in "P" mode, ISO 800, center-point autofocus. I then started to take a bunch of shots of her with it on, and it happened that frame #55 was the most interesting shot. I loved how ambiguous the shot is-- she looks like a possessed Martian, with her red-hot lips slightly open.

One of the things I recommend is to try to make interesting images of those who you are close to. Know that the street photography "aesthetic" can be applied to any type of photography.

I generally think what makes a great street photograph is ambiguity, story-telling, and mystery. And I think that is what makes this shot work.
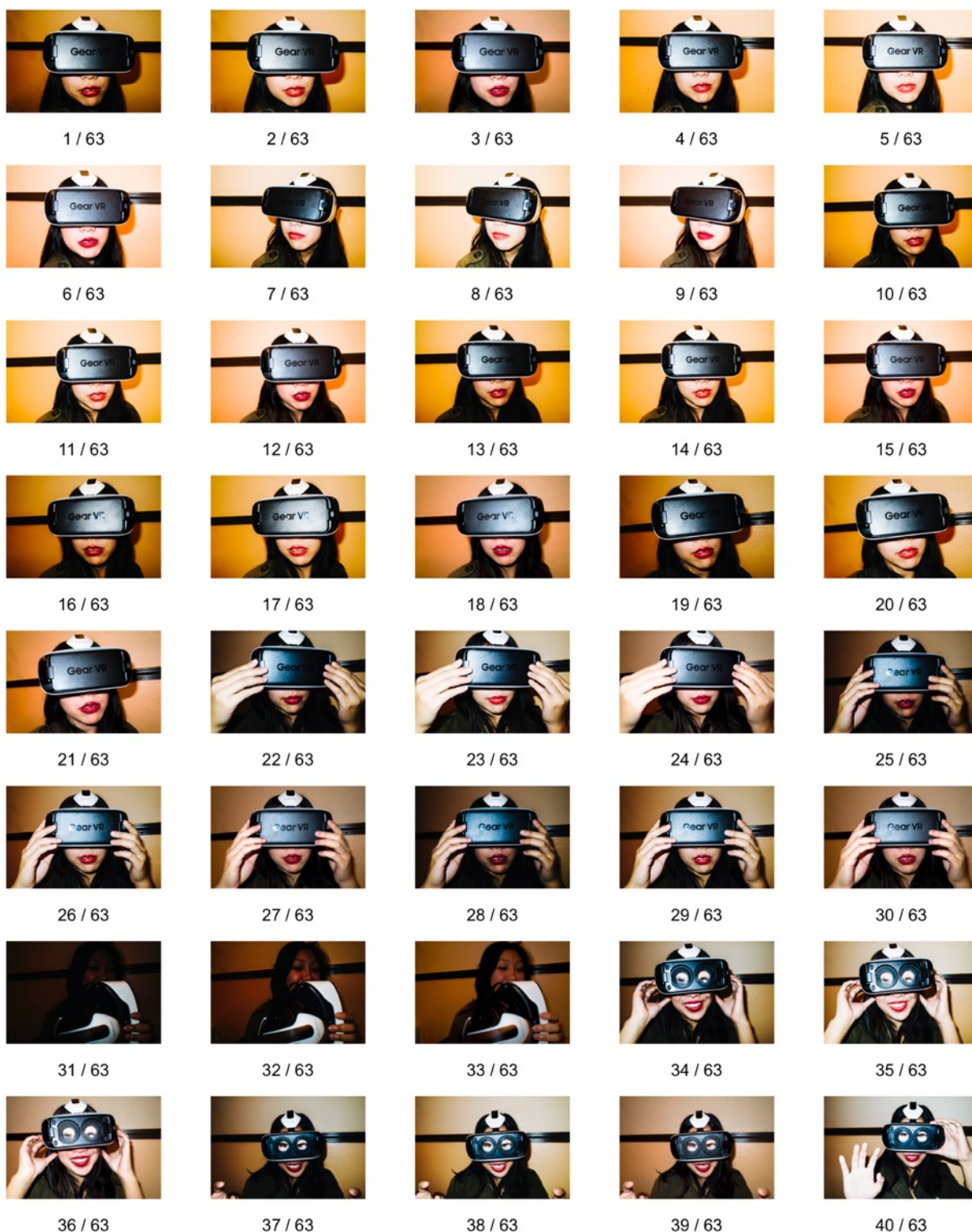
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BERLIN, 2015

One of the biggest benefits of shooting black-and-white film (especially Kodak Tri-X) is that it has so much latitude (shades of light). For example, in this photograph I shot of Cindy, you can see how the light is coming from behind her head, but her face is still decently lit.

When it comes to making photos of Cindy, I like to incorporate nice geometry around her (inspired by Henri Cartier-Bresson).

The story behind this shot: we were staying at an Air B&B in Berlin, and on the way out to eat breakfast, I saw the nice leading lines of the staircase. So I asked her to stand there, and just pose for me.

The first photograph was shot without a flash, and the next few photos were shot with a flash. You can see how much more intensity the flash adds to the shots.

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Ultimately I preferred the first shot, because I feel that the natural light makes the photo feel a lot softer, and less intense.

The aesthetics of an image affect the emotion and mood of the shot. For example, natural light tends to work best for "soft" subjects-- for example, my subtle love for Cindy.

However if you want to make photos that have more energy and intensity, flash generally tends to add to that feeling and imagery.

24

AMSTERDAM, 2013

As a photographer, you are a filter. You decide what to include in the frame, and what *not* to include in the frame.

In this photograph of a lonely-looking man in the train, you assume that he is all alone; by himself.

However in reality, you can see how his wife was sitting next to him. But I intentionally decided to exclude her from the frame, because an image of an older couple next to one another isn't very interesting.

So realize that when it comes to making street photos; **you are creating your own version of reality**. I feel as street photographers, we are not held by the same ethics of photojournalists or documentary photographers.

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As an exercise, the next time you see an interesting scene; decide what to *exclude* from the frame to make a more interesting open-ended story.

25

BERLIN, 2015

What more fun than to head into a bar in the middle of the day (in this case, around noon in Berlin)?

I was teaching a workshop in Berlin, and with two of my students. We saw this interesting bar from outside, and I encouraged them both to enter-- because once again; you never know if there might be an interesting happening inside.

When we entered we saw an older lady, and this fantastic character drinking (a bunch) of beer during the middle of the day. On the outside, the man seemed a bit stubborn and scary-- but when chatting with him, he was totally cool.
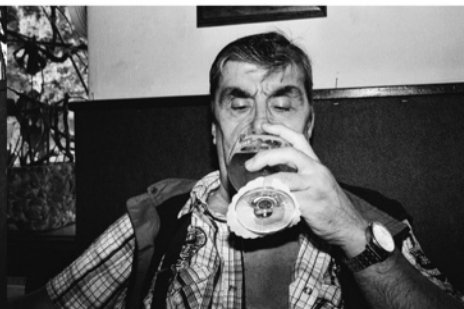
So I strapped on the flash on my Leica MP, and started to "get to work." You can see in the contact sheet how I "worked the scene" by shooting some photos from a distance (#1, #6) whereas the other photos were all shot very closely (.7-1 meters). I tried to get shots of him in "action" drinking the beer,

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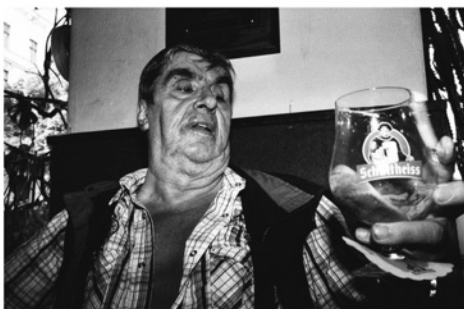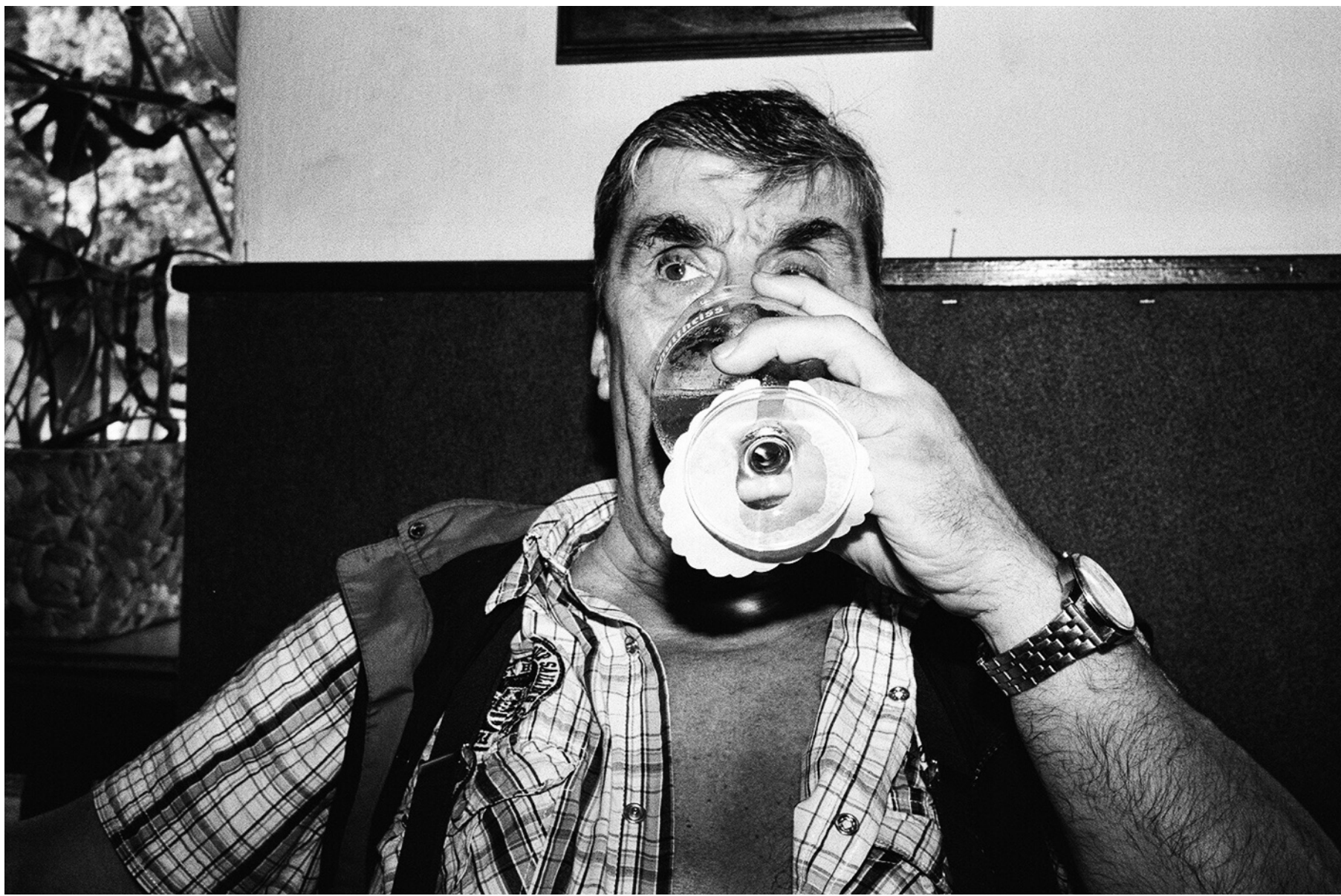7 / 13

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because capturing a gesture is far more interesting than him just posing.

The photo above is another photo I considered, because I like his eye peering off to the side.

Ultimately I preferred shot #11, because I love the texture in his face and chin, as well as the way he is looking lovingly to his glass of beer-- as well as the fact you can see the logo of the man in his hand.

As a lesson: try to explore more bars; you will find some very interesting characters inside (especially during the day). And don't be meek to get really close to your subjects, and take photos while they're doing something.
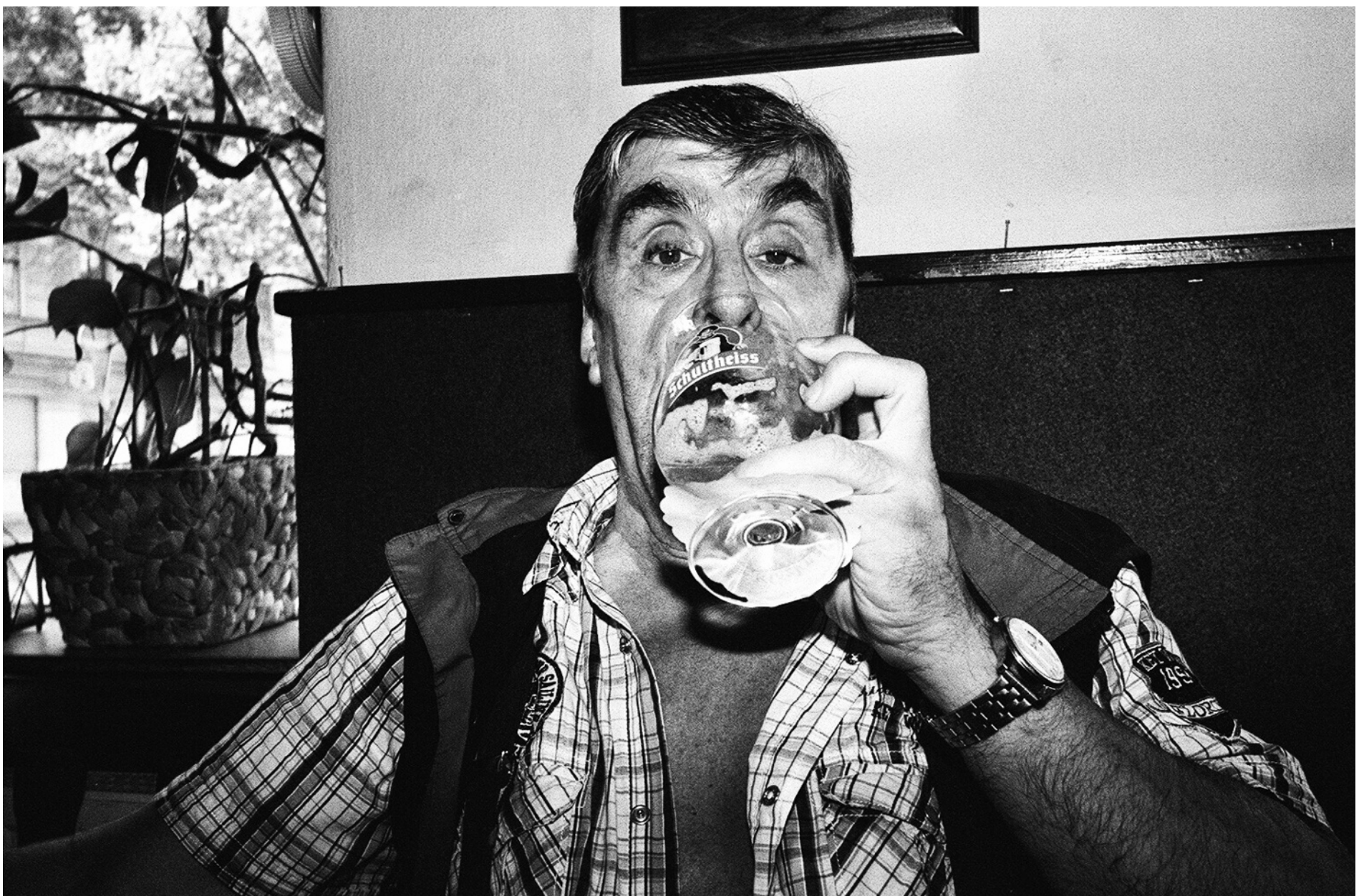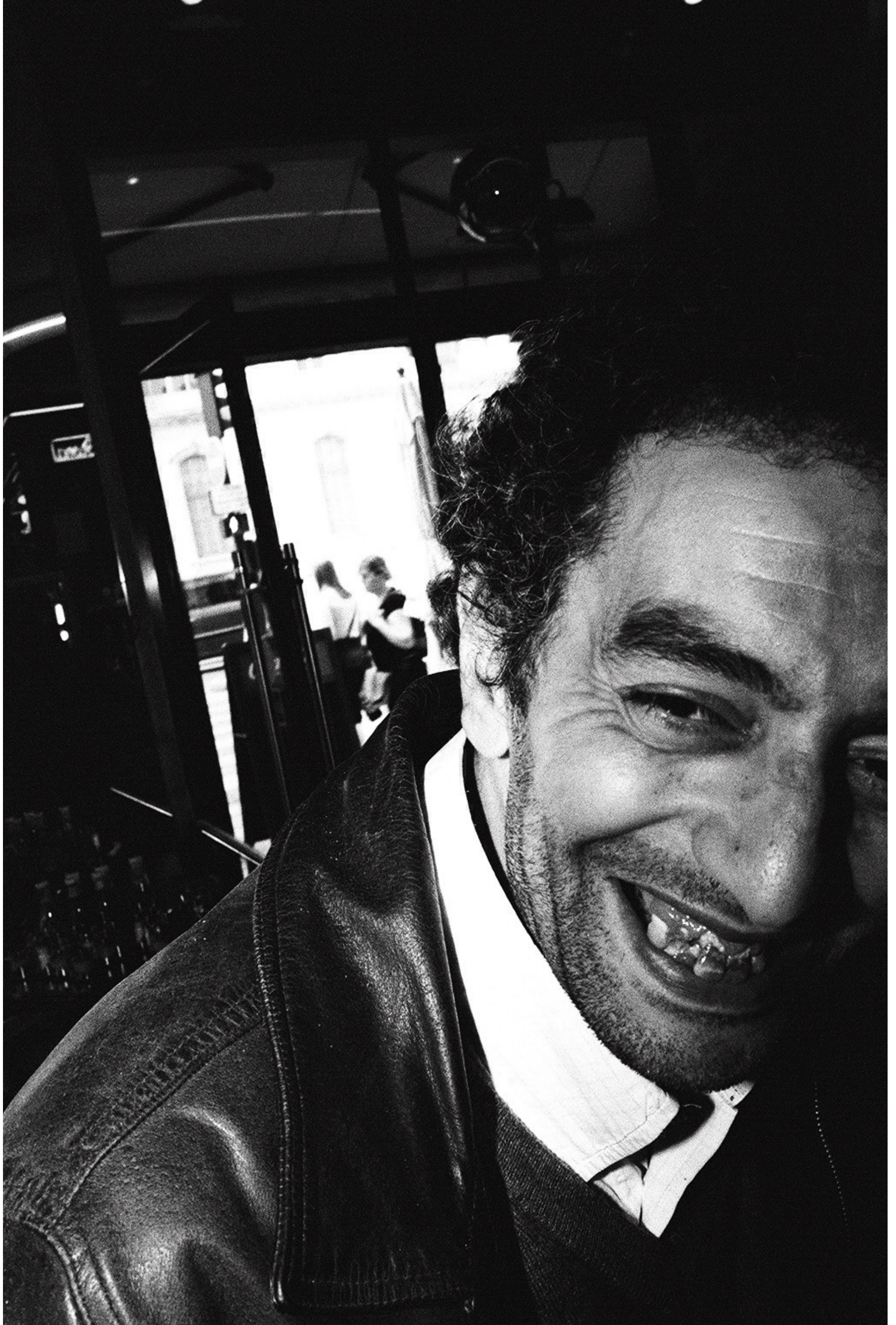
PARIS, 2015

One of the things I love most about street photography is that I don't know what I want until I see it.

In this case, I was in Paris at a coffee shop, and I saw this interesting character. I don't recall what I chatted with him about, but somewhere along the way he started to chuckle, and I saw this fantastic teeth.

I then asked him if I could make a portrait of him, and he posed in a pretty boring way (frame #1). However I wanted him to show his teeth, so I said, "Can you show me your teeth?" (while saying this, I smiled really big, and started to laugh heartily).

Echoing me, he also started to laugh too, and I took a quick photo at minimum focusing distance with my Leica MP (at .7 meters) at f/16 with my flash (Leica SF 20) powered for .7 meters at minimum power.

I only took two photos here, but I am glad that I got the second photograph. I find a few things distracting-- like the huge white space in the middle of the frame, but ultimately I like the energy of the shot-- his huge grin, his teeth, and the fact he is falling out of the frame on the right side.

If you see something you want to elicit from your subject, try to mimic the behavior what you want them to do.

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JOSH WHITE: ERIC KIM PORTRAITPO

Josh: This one, ha, is a bit funny. The story behind taking Eric's current (at the time of this writing) profile photo.

The story starts in the Hongdae District of Seoul. Eric and his girlfriend Cindy had come to Korea for a workshop that Eric and I would teach for Leica Korea. Not drinking much these days, Eric asked for a tour of coffee shops in Hongdae, famous mostly for a different type of drink.

I knew of one cool little cafe that I had been too a couple of years ago in the downstairs of a pub. Honestly, it had been converted into a coffee shop/house in which we ended up in the "library" sitting room.

This book above was on our table.

A cool photo, we thought. It is Truman Capote in case you were curious. I had seen it before as had Eric. He jokingly said he wanted me to take a similar one of him with the twist of my style, whatever that means, ha.

So, this ensued.

Overall, I took ten photos including the photo of the book. I used a Sony compact camera with flash. We tried some different poses and attempts to get the light I wanted.

The cafe was pretty dark so I used the flash on the camera. I almost always do now anyway. I still couldn't really get it right so I had our other friend, Harry, hold a couple of phones with their flashes on for some extra light diffusing one with a napkin, lol. I guess the moral of the story is to use what you've got.

In fact, frame #7 was my favorite, ha. Eric and I usually agree on photos so I suppose it is kinda ironic that we would have different favorites. I think the one he likes is closer to the original, so that's cool.

Either way, I quite like the photo. Like many of my photos now, I don't care a whole lot about whether or not they are great photos as long as I like them and they serve their purpose to me.
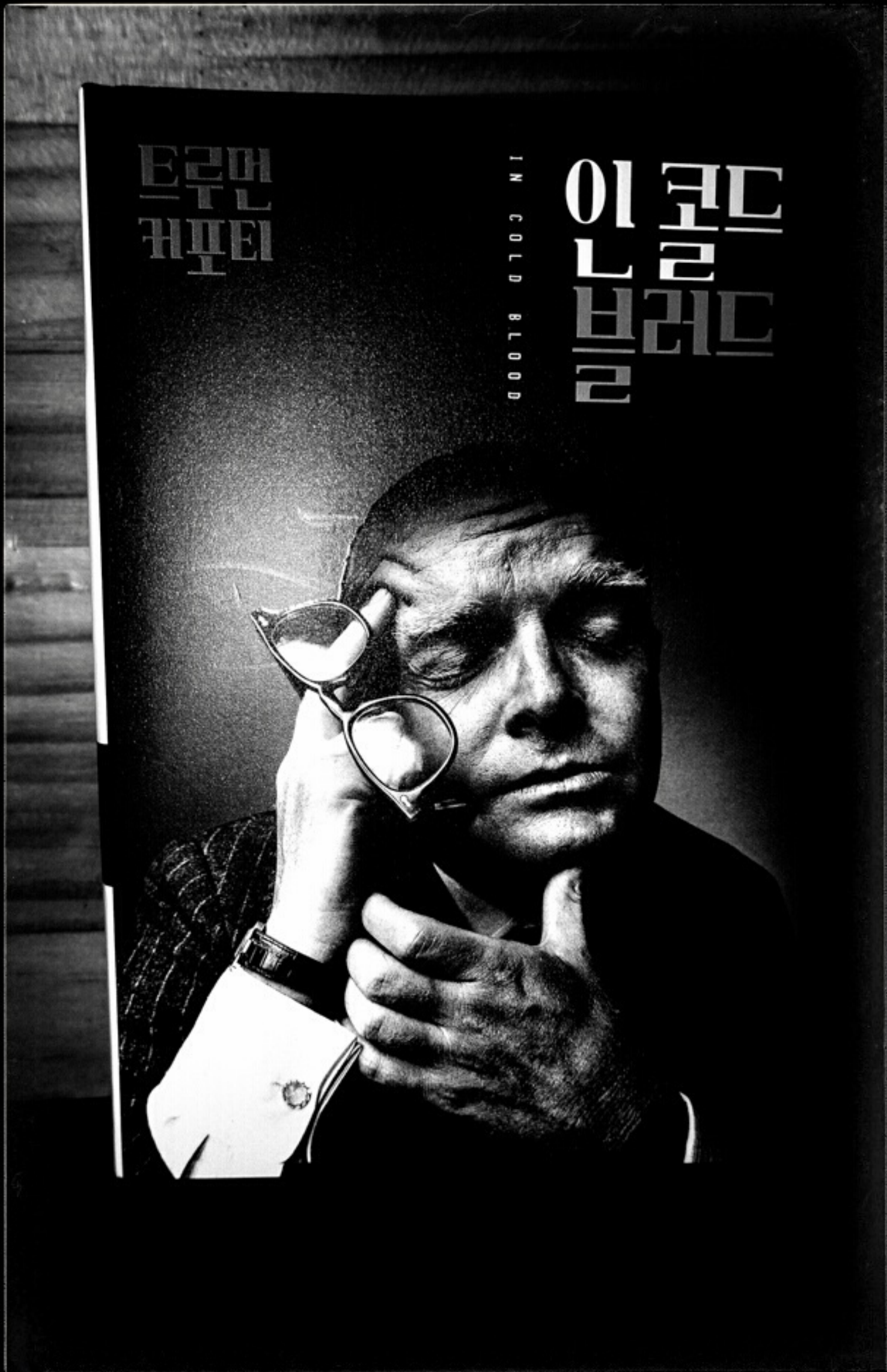
To be a good memory.

In this case, a funny one.

My favorite photo

Josh's favorite photo

The inspiration behind the shoot: Truman Capote by Irving Penn

JOSH
WHITE:
HOMAGE
TO DAIDO

Josh: After getting a recent email asking if I could share the "contact sheets" of some of my recent photos I thought I would post one like this. It isn't a contact sheet, in the traditional sense, but you can see the photos I took both before and after the one that ended up being the one I kept. Due to my limited abilities with Lightroom and Photoshop this was the best I could figure out how to display it.

I suppose the point of such an exercise is just to show that when taking pictures in any situation, you shouldn't just take one photo. Obviously, not the most comfortable situation to be photographing it would have been easy to just take one photo and put the camera down.

Why though? It isn't often the first photo is the one I like best. Rarely, in fact.

Don't be afraid to direct. I told her what to do after the first. "More profile!" in my shit Korean I told her as I wanted to see more of her face. I didn't look at the screen (it was a Fujifilm digital camera) after taking the photos. I never do anymore. In a situation like this I forget about anything besides getting a photo. I got closer after the second.

Then the cigarette was done so I stopped.

Seoul, South Korea.

February, 2014.
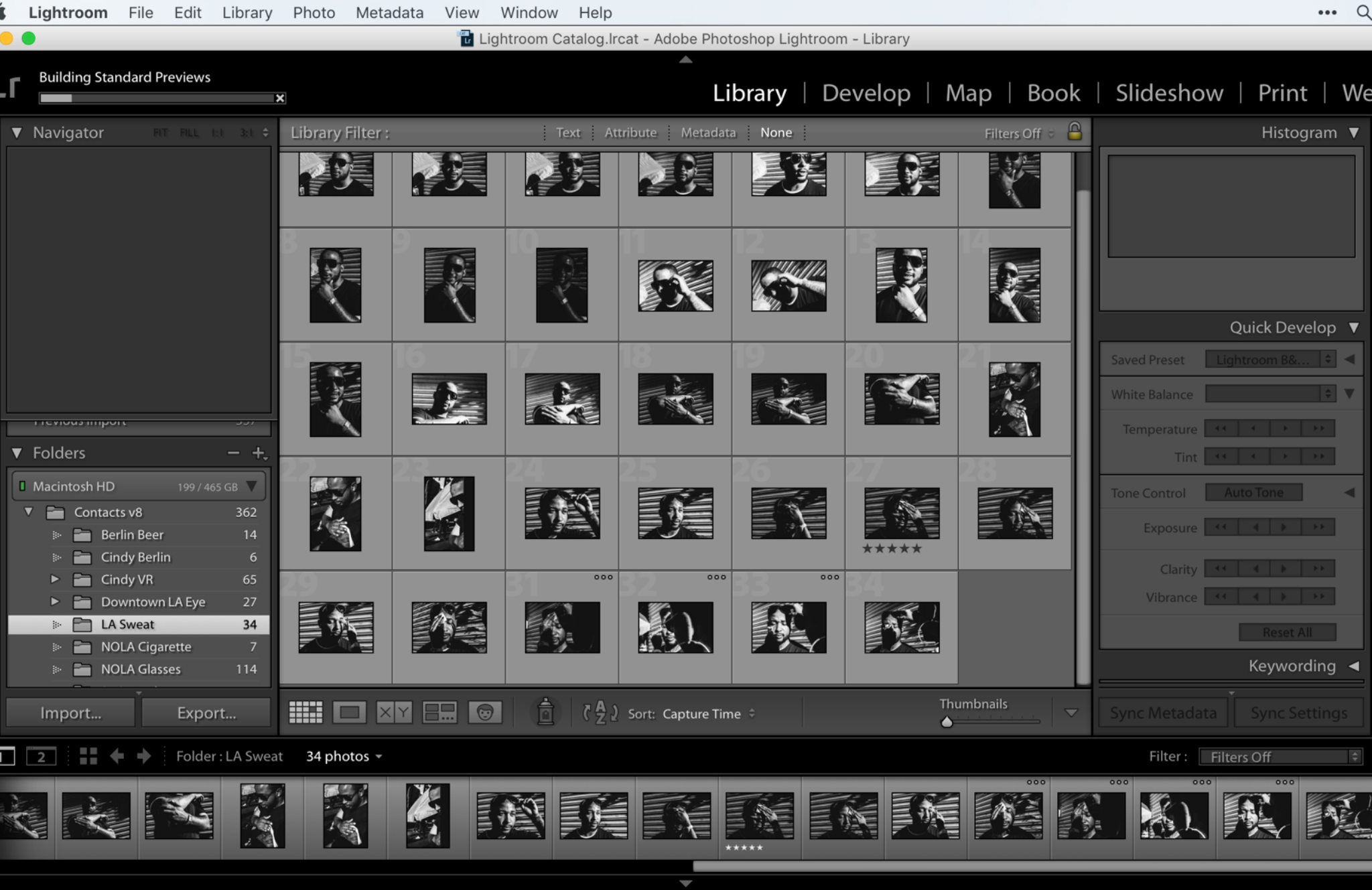
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# HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN CONTACT SHEETS IN LIGHTROOM

I hope you enjoyed seeing some of my contact sheets, and learning a bit how I was able to create some of my personal favorite images. Like a good chef, I will also teach how you can share your own personal recipes or contact sheets with others.

To create contact sheets, I first open up the images in Lightroom.

Then you can select all the images (Command+A) and then press "Print" in the top-right corner of Lightroom.

In the "Print" screen, make sure you have "Single Image / Contact Sheet" selected in the "Layout Style" dialogue in the top-right corner.

Under "Image Settings", make sure to have "Zoom to Fill" checked.
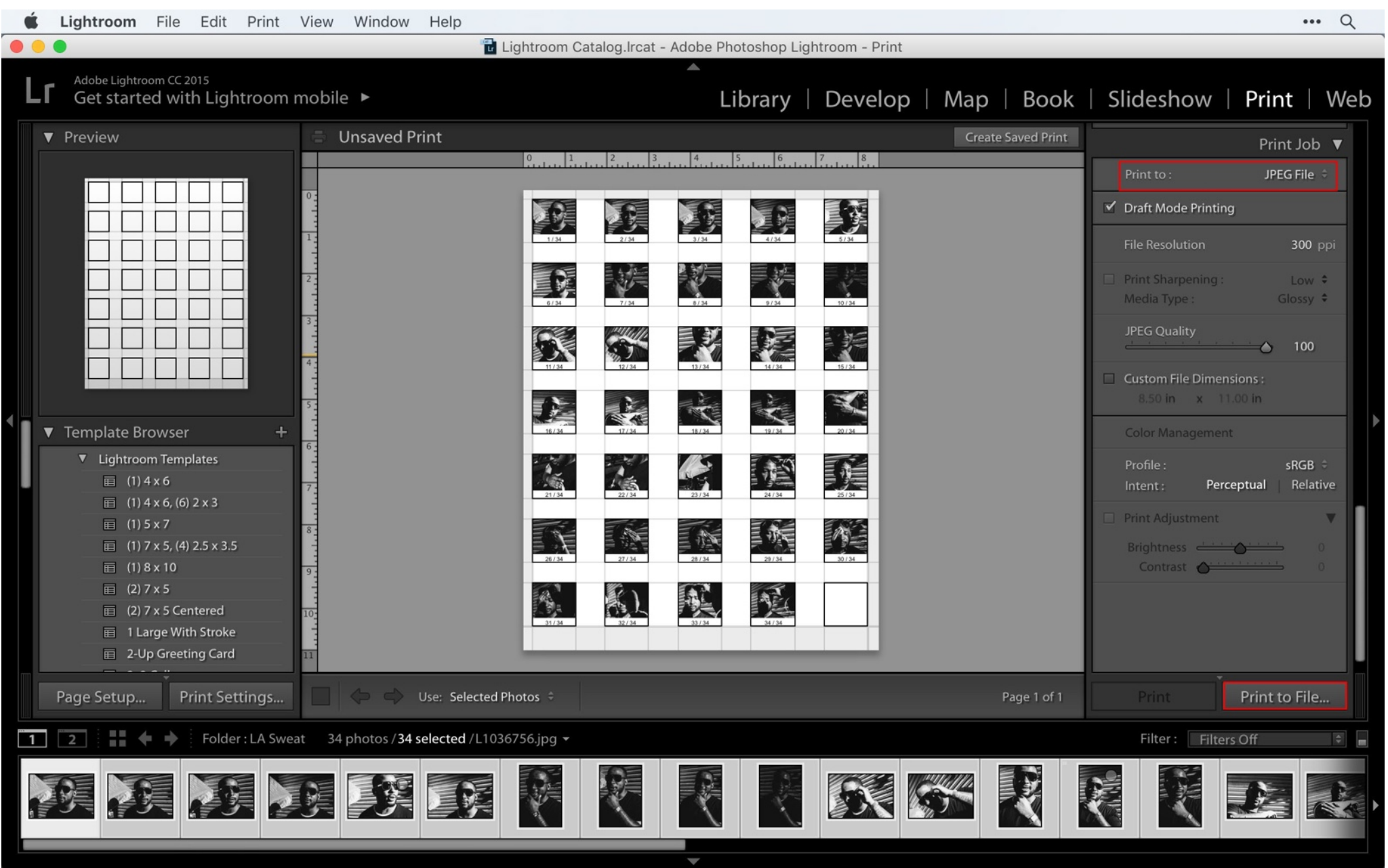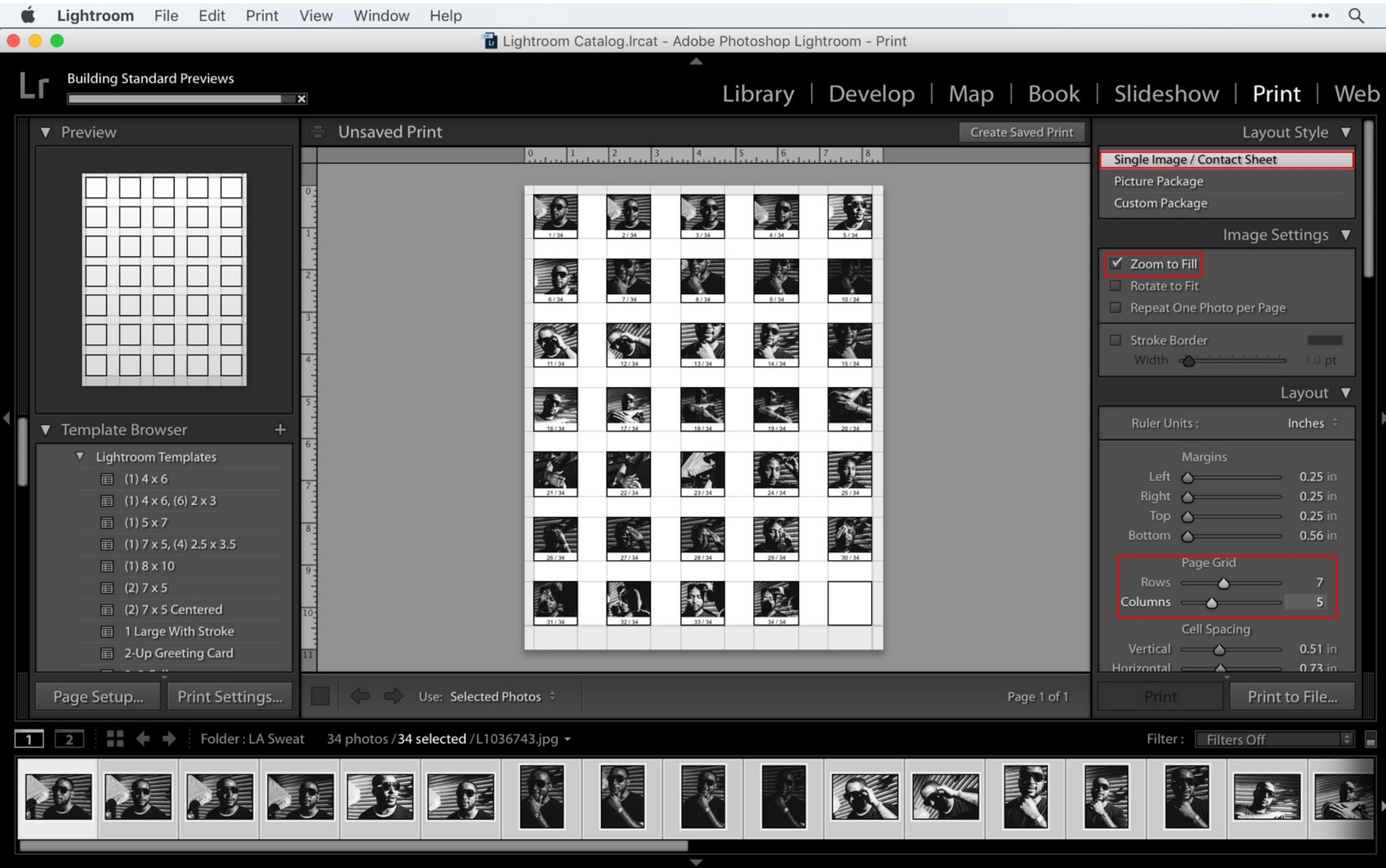
Then looking down under "Page Grid", you can adjust the number of images in "Rows" and "Columns" (you just adjust this to have all the images appear on one page).

Then you scroll down on the right column, and make sure under "Print Job" that you have "Print to" set to "**JPEG File**." Then click on "Print to file" and save the contact sheet as a JPEG.

Once you finish this step, you can open up the JPEG file and use an image-editing software (like Photoshop) to add the little red boxes to your contact sheet.

In Photoshop, I use the "Rectangular Marquee Tool" (hotkey M), circle the image I like, and then right-click (Control+click with Mac). Then I select "Stroke" and use a width of around 3px to highlight the images.

Another free tool you can use to make screenshots is to use "Jing" (a free screenshot app that you can make rectangular red boxes very easily).

I'm sure there are a lot of other ways to make contact sheets-- if you don't have Lightroom or Photoshop just google: "How to make digital contact sheets."

And if you are really ambitious, you can also learn how to make your own "real" film contact sheets in the darkroom. Also I'm sure you can find that information on Google.
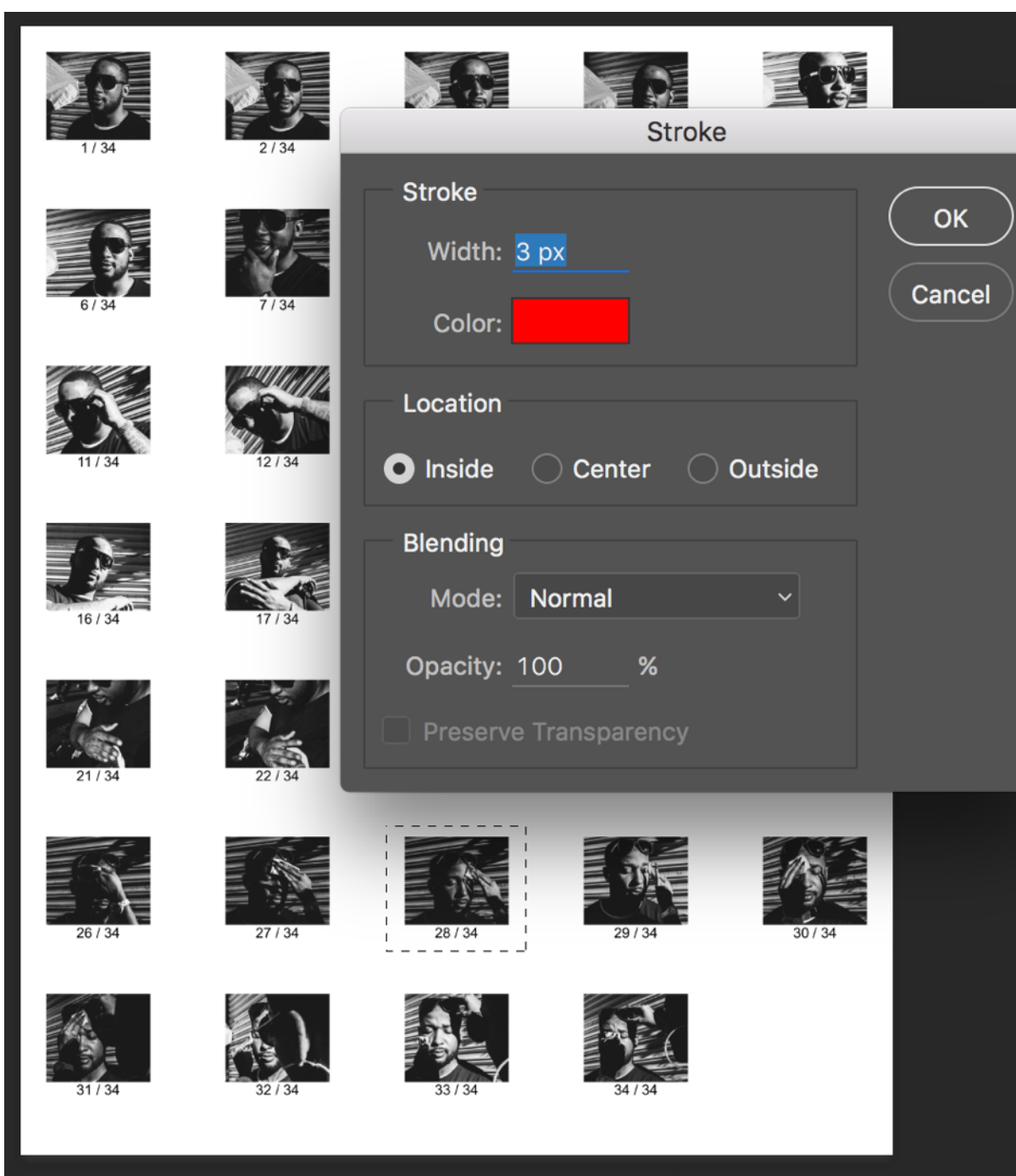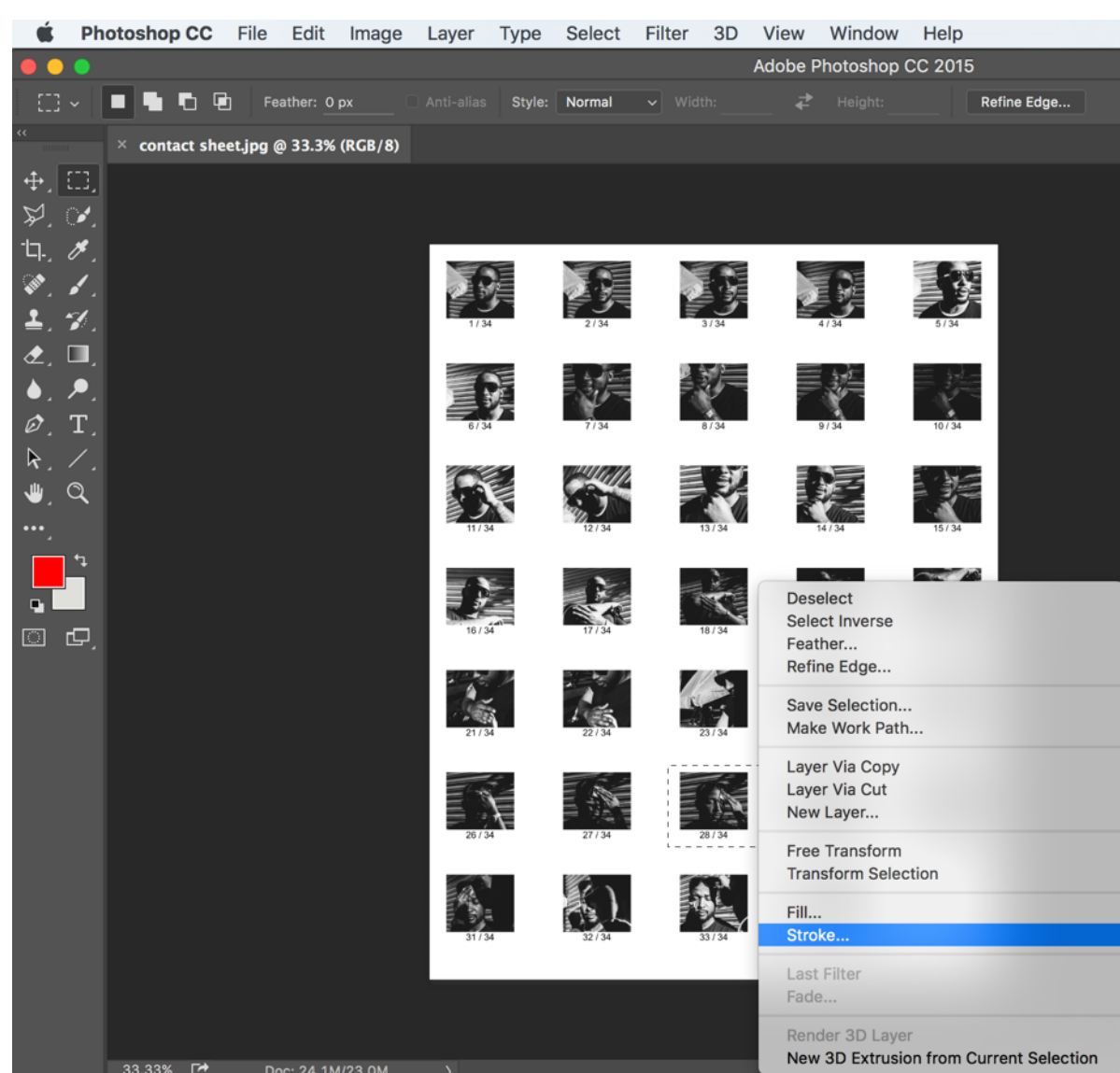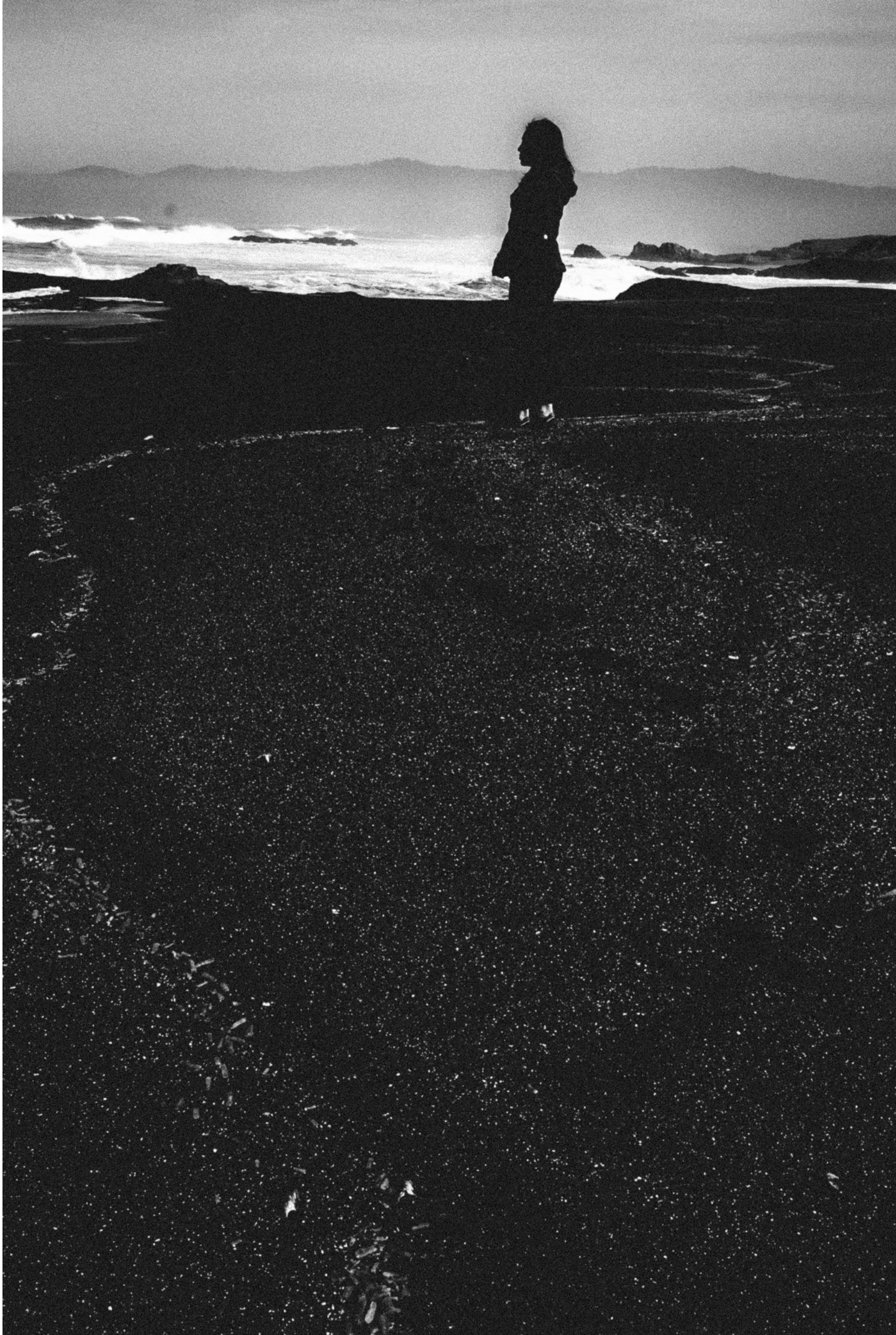
SHARE YOUR SECRETS

One of the reasons why the human race has continued to propagate is because we share our information.

I think there is a general trend in the art world in which people want to hide their "trade secrets" and *not* be generous in terms of sharing "how" they create their art.

But what are people afraid of? Just by sharing how you create your art doesn't hurt you. In-fact; you empower other artists, especially those starting off.

So I encourage you to be open with your "secrets." If you have a certain post-processing method in your photos, share it openly and freely. In-fact, by being open with your "secrets", you can actually become more "famous" -- and the more people who use your specific "method" will respect and spread your name around more.

Regardless of what your intentions, the more you share your information, the more you drive the human race forward.

When you were starting off as a beginner, consider all your teachers who helped you. And as a good human, I think it is important for us to "pay it forward."

For me, I am grateful for all my teachers, mentors, and fellow colleagues who helped me learn everything I know about photography and especially the niche of "street photography."

So consider this free e-book as a chance to pay it forward with you-- to know that street photography is a lot of hard work and luck. The harder you work, the more you go out and shoot, the more you "work the scene", and the more bold and confident you are; the more likely you are to make powerful images.

There is no voodoo or "talent" in photography. Chance favors the prepared, and those who take risks.

So always take risks in your photography, and push your boundaries. There is no limit--only your own creativity and courage.

Always,

Eric

@ Allegro roasters in Whole Foods at Gilman, Berkeley, 11:45am, Feb 27, 2016.

FREE BOOKS BY ERIC KIM

1. [100 Lessons From the Masters of Street Photography](#) (2016)

2. [The Street Photography Composition Manual](#) (2015)

3. [The Street Portrait Manual](#) (2015)

4. [Street Photography 101: An Introduction to Street Photography](#) (2015)

5. [Street Photography Aphorisms, Heuristics, and Sayings](#) (2015)

6. [How to Overcome Photographer's Block](#) (2015)

7. [The Social Media Blackbook for Photographers](#) (2015)

8. [Zen in the Art of Street Photography](#) (2015)

9. [Letters from a Street Photographer](#) (2015)

10. [31 Days to Overcome Your Fear in Street Photography](#) (2012)